

The Scott Library

Goethe's Criticisms, Reflections, etc.

Goethe's Criticisms,
Reflections and Maxims.
With an Introduction

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE was born on the 28th August 1749, at Frankfort-on-the-Main. His family lived in comfortable circumstances, and from Michaelmas 1765 till the autumn of 1768 young Goethe studied jurisprudence at Leipzig. In the spring of 1770 he went to Strasburg, where he graduated in the following year. In August 1771 he was sworn in as a lawyer in his native town. The summer of 1772 was spent at Wetzlar, and the three years following at home. About this time he formed several noteworthy acquaintances, with Klinger, Merck, Jacobi, Lavater, and others. His *Götz* (1773) and *Werther* (1774) earned for him among his nation the fame of a writer of the highest rank. This led to an invitation from the Duke Karl August of Weimar, in October 1775, to Goethe to take up his residence in that town; he arrived there in the following month, and in 1776 decided to make it his permanent abode. Before long he was united to the Duke in the closest of friendships, and was appointed member of the Council, with a seat and a vote, in June 1776, and Privy Councillor in 1779. A few years later he was also entrusted with the control of the ducal exchequer, and in 1782 he was raised by the Emperor to the nobility. The period between

September 1786 and June 1788 was devoted to his first Italian journey. In 1790 he once more visited northern Italy, and in 1792 accompanied the Duke on a journey to the Champagne. In 1797 he visited Switzerland. On the 19th October 1806 he married Christiane Vulpius; she died in June 1816. From 1790 till 1817 Goethe superintended the direction of the Weimar theatre. Appointed chief minister of state in 1815, he continued to hold office till the death of Karl August in June 1828, when he retired altogether from public affairs. He died, after a brief illness, on the 22nd March 1832, in his eighty-third year, and was buried in the ducal family vault at Weimar,

INTRODUCTION.

SPEAKING of German writers, "there is none," Carlyle tells us, "that has been more unjustly dealt with than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. For half a century the admiration, we might almost say the idol of his countrymen, to us he is still a stranger. His name, long echoed and re-echoed through Reviews and Magazines, has become familiar to our ears: but it is a sound and nothing more; it excites no definite idea in almost any mind."

These words were written over seventy years ago, since which time much has been done to procure for the merits of Goethe a fair and just recognition in this country. Many of his works have been rendered, sometimes well, but more often badly, into English. His biography, by George Henry Lewes—an elaborate apology for him, addressed to the English Philistine, as the late Professor Boyesen depreciatively termed it—is known, at any rate by name, to all. The articles, reviews, essays, books of all kinds and dimensions, written about Goethe, would fill no small library. And although the majority of such criticisms are but evidence of the pains taken by their

cially intended—a good deal of misconception still seems to prevail with regard to Goethe. His name is to-day much more than a mere sound; it excites more or less definite ideas in many minds, but unfortunately those ideas are often erroneous, based, as they usually are, upon an insufficient acquaintance with the author in question. Professor Boyesen, in one of his essays,¹ comes to the conclusion that the British public is not “Goethe-ripe”; by which he means that we have not yet attained the degree of intellectual maturity enabling us to comprehend the significance of Goethe’s life and works. That the French, likewise, are not “Goethe-ripe,” is no less certain; in fact, the difficulties which stand in the way of a due appreciation of Goethe in France cannot but be much greater than in our own case.² As for the Germans themselves, he is with most of them the greatest writer of all ages and nations. And since it must be conceded that he is an author who demands our fullest investigation and minutest study, we should be careful not to allow our national prejudices to bias any estimate which we may form of him. We must make due allowance for differences of time and place, and endeavour, as Carlyle puts it, to *see* him before attempting to *oversee* him.

Shakespeare, as is well known, was long disre-

¹ *Essays on German Literature* (London, Fisher Unwin), p. 85.

² The extent to which national antipathy can influence and warp the minds even of men of intelligence and insight, may be seen from the criticisms of M. Edmond Scherer upon Goethe, some of which are, to say the least of it, puerile.

garded by his own countrymen. We smile at the manner in which Voltaire misunderstood him; yet we forget that in part, at all events, he recognised the merits of our national poet; we also overlook the fact that at that time we ourselves did no better. Nor was it until Lessing wrote his *Dramaturgie* that the attention of the world was drawn to the true greatness of Shakespeare. Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Schlegel, Tieck, and others, took up the mission with such zeal and insight that, to use Carlyle's words, "in their criticisms of him, we ourselves have long ago admitted that no such clear judgment or hearty appreciation of his merits had ever been exhibited by any critic of our own." It is to the Germans, then, that we are chiefly indebted for having called the world's attention to Shakespeare. The time has come when we should all endeavour to recognise those of Goethe, and, profiting by the lessons taught us by Carlyle and his successors, seek to follow them up with a careful study of Goethe's works and also of his life; for in this instance perhaps more than in any other do we find the man and the writer indissolubly connected.

In the case of Goethe it is not sufficient to know merely one or two of his writings. All his literary works are biographical; each one of them represents a different phase in his life, a fresh stage of culture through which he passed; and it is only by studying the combined works that one can attach to each its proper importance.

During the years 1772-75, which Goethe spent at Frankfurt before going to Weimar, he published various works which already placed him in the front rank of German writers. He was a little over twenty years of age when he wrote his first romance, *The Sorrows of Werther*. To any modern reader there is much in the book that will seem absurd; yet the story is wonderfully well told, the style is remarkably clear, and the passion presented is such as would seize upon the heart of youth, in all times, with overpowering truth. Before this work appeared he had already composed *Gotz von Berlichingen*, a drama which, though by no means faultless, yet heralds the advent of a new era in the history of German literature. Besides these two works which were given to the world during the above period, we must include his *Clavigo* and *Stella*, the commencement of *Egmont*, various satirical and festal pieces, the rough sketches of his *Mahomet* and *Prometheus*, and a number of the most charming songs and ballads. At this early stage his productive talent was at its highest, nor, as he himself tells us, did it ever abandon him even for a moment.

The famous *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* may also be mentioned here. This work has been variously judged; Schiller and Carlyle were loud in their praises of it, whilst Niebuhr, and Scherer after him, contented themselves with calling it "a menagerie of tame animals." With all its faults it is yet full of genius. The various characters are drawn in a

marked manner, whilst the stray criticisms which it contains upon literature, art, politics and other matters, are of the deepest interest. The principal fault to be found with the work is the absence of any coherent plan running through it, thus causing a lack of unity. The same blemish characterises the sequel, *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings*, a work which is even less coherent than the *Apprenticeship* and hardly as interesting.

In *Faust*—a work which Goethe first conceived when he was still a youth at Strasburg, and which he did not finish until his eighty-second year—he has created the greatest poetical masterpiece of the nineteenth century; probably, indeed, the greatest since the time of Shakespeare. In consequence of the great length of time which intervened between the commencement of this work and its completion, each part may almost be regarded as a detached series of scenes. The first part, with the exception of a few lines here and there, is perfectly clear. In the second part, on the other hand, mysticism and allegory prevail; although here, too, we find many passages of the highest beauty. The conception, with its profound philosophy of life, is a vast one; while whatever may be said of the obscurity of the second part—and obscurity is, after all, a relative term—the mastery of style exhibited in the work as a whole has probably never been equalled in any other work in literature.

How many English readers know his delightful

Hermann and Dorothea? In its way, the work is a perfect masterpiece; it is a delightful rural idyl, written in hexameters which have quite a Homeric ring about them; whilst as a dramatic presentation of character, the poem has few equals.

Then again, take his *Iphigenia*, and his *Tasso*, his *Roman Elegies* ("perhaps the most perfect poems of the kind in all literature"¹), and, above all, his short lyrics: what other writer of modern times has so much to show? His lyrics alone, that is to say, his lyrical romances, songs, and ballads, have never been equalled. Heine, himself a lyric poet of the first order, writes: "We are the best lyric poets in the world. No country can boast of such beautiful songs as the Germans. At present the various nations are too busily occupied with political affairs; but when once these are laid aside, we will all of us, Germans, Britons, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians,—we will all of us go forth into the green wood and sing, and the nightingale shall be our umpire. I am convinced that in this lyric contest the song of Wolfgang Goethe will carry off the prize."² And Heine, it must be borne in mind, was by no means prepossessed in favour of Goethe.

Furthermore, Goethe was probably the greatest literary and art critic whom the world has seen. We do not encounter in his writings the defiant polemical tone of a Lessing, the genial urbanity

¹ G. H. Lewes.

² Heinr. Heine, *Werke*, vol. xii. p. 74.

of a Sainte-Beuve, or the careful preciseness of a Matthew Arnold. He stands in many respects higher than any of these. To Sainte-Beuve he is simply the king of critics, and the perusal of his works, as Carlyle says, would show that if any man had studied Art in all its branches and bearings, from its origin in the depths of the creative spirit, to its minutest finish on the canvas of the painter, on the lips of the poet, or under the finger of the musician, he was that man. Since the criticism of Hamlet in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is included in the present volume, it may not be out of place here to quote two passages referring to it. "This truly," says Carlyle, "is what may be called the poetry of criticism: for it is in some sort also a creative art; aiming, at least, to reproduce under a different shape the existing product of the poet; painting to the intellect what already lay painted to the heart and the imagination."¹ The other extract is from Sir John Seeley. "The elaborate critique of Hamlet which occupies so large a space, will be interesting at least to English people, and when we remember the old controversy whether Coleridge or August Schlegel led the way to a really deep appreciation of Shakespeare's genius, we may be inclined to decide that it was neither one nor the other, but Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*."² Among the best of Goethe's criticisms upon Shakespeare must be included the essay entitled *Shakespeare und kein*

¹ *20th Century*, i. 1, 52.

² *Goethe, German Literature Society*, 1902, ch. viii.

Ende ("Shakespeare and no End"), which is also to be found in the present volume. The title of this essay is based upon the fact that at the time when it was written, certain leaders of the Romantic School, such as August Schlegel, Tieck, and others, allowing their unbounded admiration for Shakespeare to carry them too far, failed to perceive, and refused to acknowledge, any limitations whatever in their idol. Goethe, who had been a warm admirer of Shakespeare from the very first, did not in any way abandon his original position, but merely felt that the time was now come when it was his duty to protest against what he could not but regard as an exaggerated and growing enthusiasm to which there seemed likely to be no end.

In his short, detached criticisms, maxims and reflections, Goethe has left us a mine of wealth. Both in point of quantity and also as regards the subtle and abundant observation of human life and character which Goethe there displays, he may be considered the greatest writer since Montaigne and Bacon. There is no side of life in which he does not take an interest; no department of culture, no sphere of activity, of which he has not something to tell us. From the disenchanting and at times superficial utterances of a La Rochefoucauld, from the delicate irony and cold austereness of a Pascal, it is refreshing to turn to the sound common-sense and profundity of observation displayed in the sayings of a Goethe.

Of particular importance and interest, too, is his chief autobiographical work, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*

("Truth and Fiction"), which, dealing with the portion of his life that preceded his removal to Weimar, affords us a unique opportunity of becoming acquainted with the intellectual and moral status of Germany in the eighteenth century. In his *Annalen und Jahreshefte* he continues his autobiography, in a more summary description, down to the year 1822. These two works, together with his Italian Journey, his experiences in the French Campaign of 1792, and other writings of a similar nature, and, finally, his vast correspondence, afford us the most copious information on the subject of his genius, the various phases through which he passed, all the developments and changes which he perceived in himself, the literary plans he formed, and, in fine, all the movements of the consciousness of a great genius through a long life; so that we may say, with Sir John Seeley, that Goethe has compensated to mankind for its almost total loss of the biography of Shakespeare.

In addition to what has already been noted concerning Goethe, it may be added that he occupied a high rank among the scientific discoverers of his day. Botany, Optics, Mineralogy, Anatomy, and particularly Osteology, were all included in the sphere of his labours. His famous discovery of an intermaxillary bone in man as well as in animals, was made in 1784. He likewise founded the doctrine of Morphology; or rather, the vertebral theory and the theory of plant-metamorphosis are both to be traced to Goethe, and what advance has subsequently been made in this

department of science, though limiting his theory, nowise disposes of it. His prolonged attack on the Newtonian theory of colours was based upon a false conception of Newton's position, and several years were thus wasted in seeking to overthrow what was in reality an error of his own creation. It is indeed remarkable how men of genius will at times plume themselves upon their errors, in the belief that the latter belong to truth, and set more store upon them than upon works of real merit and utility. "To that which I have been able to achieve as a poet," Goethe more than once remarked to Eckermann, "I do not attach much value. Great poets have lived in my time; still greater ones have lived before me and will come after me. But of the fact that in this century I should have been the only person who, in the difficult science of colours, knew how to distinguish the true from the false, I am not a little proud, and in this respect I am conscious of my superiority over the many."

It must here be borne in mind that Goethe was not by nature a scientist, but a poet, and that the many years which he devoted to the study of the sciences were so spent mainly because his nature impelled him to develop himself as far as possible in every direction, and to further the culture of his nation by leading it into the various paths of progress. Error and inadequacy were the two great faults of his time, and one of the tasks which he set himself was that of sweeping away these faults,—a work which demanded his

unwearied and persistent efforts in many directions. He continually warns us against the folly of dividing our attention among too many interests, against splitting up our energies, instead of concentrating them upon a single, or at most a few, objects. And yet the many-sidedness of his own character has never been equalled. His studies were as varied as they were vast, and, like Napoleon, he too was a giant-worker. Eckermann tells us that Goethe would assuredly never have thought of writing his *Metamorphosenlehre*, had he found that his contemporaries were already on the right path. As it happened, however, they were at the time wandering in darkness, and he felt it his duty to go to their rescue. Eckermann even goes so far as to suggest that Goethe might never have written a *Wilhelm Meister*, if his country had already been in possession of such a work, and that, had the circumstances been more favourable, he would perhaps have devoted himself exclusively to dramatic poetry.

Be this as it may, Goethe's greatness as a scientist will be apparent when it is recollected that of his achievements in this respect such eminent authorities as Auguste and Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire; Sir Richard Owen, Helmholtz, the famous German physiologist, and others, have spoken in eulogistic terms.¹

¹ In 1838 Auguste St. Hilaire writes in reference to Goethe's *Metamorphosenlehre*: "Depuis dix ans il n'a peut-être pas été publié un seul livre d'organographie, ou de botanique descriptive qui ne porte

Yct, as Sir John Seeley tells us, "It was, as it were, out of office hours that he played the part of the greatest, most original, most various, and most consummate writer of his time." In other words, after practising at the bar at Frankfort for about three years, Goethe became an official in the service of the Duke of Weimar, and may be said to have been for about ten years his Prime Minister. Later on, when he had given up general administrative business, he still reserved to himself the department of culture, and continued to hold office as Minister of Education.

He also directed, and had absolute control over, the Weimar theatre for nearly thirty years, and endeavoured, in conjunction with Schiller, to create a German Drama,—an ideal Drama which was to represent the loftiest forms of Art. The scheme was unfortunately marred by the fact that their efforts appealed, and could only appeal, to the cultivated few. The stage was to be literary; the drama, they imagined, could be more successful as literature than as "the reflection of national life in amusing mirrors"; nor could they bring themselves to believe that instead of the lay-pulpit, instead of the grand form of art which they held the drama to be, it had sunk to the level

l'empreinte des idées de cet écrivain illustre." The following words of Helmholtz also deserve to be quoted: "To Goethe belongs the great fame of having been the first to conceive the leading ideas in which science in those days was tending, and through which its present form is determined."

of a mere amusement. The result was that their attempts failed to win the popularity they deserved, despite the lofty aims which animated them.

A passing reference to the relations between Goethe and Schiller must here suffice. Volumes might be written upon this, the most noteworthy friendship of which there is any record in the annals of literature. It is certainly unique. Its influences upon the national culture of Germany have been incalculable. The nation was long divided into two parties, disputing fiercely as to which was the greater poet of the two; and this dispute has, in some measure, been carried on even to the present day. In the same way, in Rome, the artists hold varied opinions as to the respective merits of Raphael and Michael Angelo; and speaking of these two painters, "it is difficult," Goethe somewhere remarks, "to appreciate one such genius, still more difficult to appreciate both. Hence people lighten the task by partisanship." And to Eckermann he said, in 1825: "For twenty years past the public has been disputing as to whether Schiller or I was the greater poet. The public ought to be glad that it has two such fellows worth quarrelling about."

And now we come to the question: wherein lies Goethe's chief claim to the attention of the world? There have been greater scientists than he; there have been greater statesmen, and, save in the field of lyric poetry, greater poets. In almost every branch of literature he has been surpassed, if not by some

modern writer, at all events by one or other of the ancients. Yet there has probably never been a man of such many-sided endowments and varied intellectual equipment. Taking him for all in all, he is the most complete man of whom we have any record. Already in his early youth he felt an all-absorbing impulse to develop himself on all sides of his nature, morally, physically, and intellectually; or, as he himself somewhat grandiloquently puts it, "a desire to raise the pyramid of my existence, the base of which is already laid, as high as possible into the air." And throughout his long life he never wavered in this purpose; all other ambitions, passions, and desires had to be subordinated to it. "I must not neglect myself," he wrote; "I am already fairly advanced in years, and my destiny may break in the middle and leave the Tower of Babel unfinished. At least men shall say, 'It was boldly planned.'" From those persons with whom he came in contact he absorbed as much as was conducive to his further development, and when they had nothing further to give him, he would generally cut himself adrift from them and seek fresh food for culture in other directions. He has consequently been charged over and over again with selfishness, and condemned for a want of consideration for others. It is easy to make accusations, but often very difficult to dispel them when once they have taken root in the popular mind. That Goethe was selfish cannot be denied. But selfishness is not always a bad quality; and it was

absolutely necessary for Goethe that he should lead a selfish life if he was to reach the highest point of self-culture. He was not a reformer, nor a martyr, but a poet, whose religion was beauty, whose worship was of nature, whose aim was culture. Had he pandered to all the petty conventionalities of his time, and adhered to the laws laid down and followed by the great mass of people who are content to go through life without any fixed aim; had he listened to the nobodies who so often form the *entourage* of great men, and who cannot understand that a great man has something better to do than to dance to their piping: the world would in that case have been deprived of the unique example now furnished to it by his life and works. What he lived, says Merck, was even more beautiful than what he wrote. To which may be added the testimony of another friend of his, viz., Jung Stilling, that "Goethe's heart, which few knew, was as great as his intellect, which all knew."

Then, again, it is complained that Goethe's life was not governed by a Christian ideal. Though he never altogether freed himself from German influence, he was more Greek than German. He probably forms the only example of a great genius whose life was exempt from misfortune, in the common sense of the term. He never knew anything of adversity. Want and poverty were strangers to him. He consequently ignored the educational value of suffering, as did also the Hellenic ideal of culture. The result of his first visit to Italy, where he lived amid Greek

sculpture and Italian life under an Italian sky, was the reflection for the first time of the southern world of art in the mirror of a mind large enough to contain it all, and clear enough to give it back faithfully. The event would have been unique, if Goethe had not had a precursor in Winckelmann, who was also a Greek born out of his time.

He continually declares war against the doctrine of self-denial or abstinence,—that is to say, in all cases where no special end is to be gained thereby,—and pronounces false and blasphemous the maxim that “All is vanity.” That “all is *not* vanity” is indeed almost the substance of his philosophy. He regards the life of self-denial as unhealthy, even from a moral point of view. His advice to us is not to let sluggishness, apathy, or self-denial make our lives unhealthy and stagnant, but to be genuine and strenuous, to develop those faculties with which we have been endowed, and thus render our existence harmonious. And, after all, the refined form of selfishness with which Goethe has been charged is no worse than that which actuates most men who are at all ambitious in their aims or desirous of devoting their lives to some great purpose. For selfishness is no bad thing in itself; it has been defined as nature’s one great agent for the improvement of humanity, and will be found to underlie even the most disinterested actions. We are struck, in reading Goethe’s works, by the profound seriousness which prevails throughout; nor is this to be wondered at, for the life-task which he set before

himself was such as could only be imagined by a man of great originality, and only carried out by a man of very steadfast and unflinching will. "I have always been regarded as a special favourite of fortune," he once said to Eckermann; "nor do I complain or regret the course which my life has taken. Yet at bottom it has been made up of nothing but toil and trouble, and I think I may say that during my seventy-five years I have not enjoyed as much as four weeks of real comfort."

In the controversies of his time, as in politics generally, Goethe took practically no interest. He declined to be drawn aside from his task by such matters. He was forty years old when the French Revolution broke out, and was unable to regard as otherwise than a disturbance that great upheaval which to so many others proved a source of inspiration. During and after the war of liberation he was blamed for not having taken up arms, or at least aiding the cause in his capacity of a poet. "It is an absurd world," he cries, "which knows not what it wants, and must be allowed to go on talking. How could I have taken up arms without hatred? And how could I have hated without youth? If these things had happened to me when I was a youth of twenty, I should assuredly not have been the last to stir; but they came upon me when I had already passed my sixtieth year. Nor can we all serve our fatherland in the same way; every one does his best according to the light that is in him. I have had

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toil and trouble enough during half a century; and, whilst I have been engaged in the things which Nature has allotted to me as my daily task, I can say that I have allowed myself no rest either by day or by night; I have permitted myself no recreation, but have ever toiled and striven as well and as much as I could. If every one could say the same of himself, we should all of us be well off. . . . To sit in a room and write martial songs,—so *that* should have been my style indeed! In a bivouac, at night, where one can hear the neighing of the horses from the enemy's outposts: there it might at any rate have been feasible. But that was not the business of *my* life, not *my* duty, but that of Theodor Körner. From him such martial songs come with perfect appropriateness. But as for myself, who am not of a hostile nature, whose disposition is nowise warlike, such songs would have formed a mask that had ill fitted me. Throughout my whole poetic career I have never had recourse to affectation. What I did not live, what I did not feel a burning impulse to express, I have never fashioned into poems or utterances. Love-poems I have written only when I loved. And (between ourselves be it said) I did not hate the French, although I thanked God when we were rid of them. How could I, to whom culture and barbarism are alone of importance, have hated a nation which belongs to the most cultivated in the world, and to which I owed so large a portion of my own culture? After all, national hate

is, as a rule, a peculiar thing. At the lowest stages of culture you will always find it most strongly and keenly developed. Yet there is a stage at which it entirely disappears, when one stands in a certain sense *above* the nations; so that one is affected by the good or bad fortune of a neighbouring people just as though it had happened to one's own. This stage of culture corresponds to my nature, and I had become inured to it long before I reached my sixtieth year." A truly memorable utterance, which explains much of Goethe's indifference to the political movements of his time.

Want of space will not allow of further reference to the interesting subject of Goethe's life and character, the various phases of culture and religious feeling through which he passed, the history of his marriage¹ and the part which love played throughout his life. To those who wish to learn something of Germany's greatest man of letters, I should advise a perusal of Lewes' admirable *Life and Works of Goethe* and a few of Carlyle's essays concerning him;² after which they should apply themselves to a study of Goethe's works (including the famous Conversations with Eckermann

¹ Those who are interested in this matter may be glad to know that the vindication of the character of Christiane Vulpius has of late years been strengthened by the production of fresh evidence, and that Lewes was doubtless in error when he wrote of "a tragedy in Goethe's life little suspected by those who saw how calmly he bore himself" (*Life and Works of Goethe*, Book VII., Chap. i.). See the article on Christiane, by Karl Heinemann, in *Westermann's Monatshefte* for March 1891.

² The most suitable of these essays for the above purpose is that contained in Carlyle's *Essays on the Greater German Poets and Writers*, published in a handy form in the Scott Library.

and Soret), which ought, if at all possible, to be read in the original, despite Emerson's well-known remark with regard to translations. This is the only way in which a just estimate can be formed of such a writer as Goethe. Much that has been written about him is of comparatively little use to any save critics and men of letters; much also is permeated with prejudice and would cause a beginner to judge him from a false standpoint. As with Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, so too in the case of Goethe, many would read into his works far more and far other things than he ever intended. In any case little will be lost, whilst much confusion and error may be avoided, if the reader will only set himself to study his author without paying too much heed to essays and criticisms beforehand. "Il y a plus affaire à interpreter les interpretations," says Montaigne, "qu'à interpreter les choses; et plus de livres sur les livres, que sur aultre subject: nous ne faisons que nous entregloser." And this evil tendency has certainly not diminished during the three centuries which have elapsed since Montaigne wrote the above words.¹

¹ In reference to this question, I must say that I fail to see what good purpose can possibly be served by playing the part of *Advocatus Diaboli* in print, in the case of Goethe, as Professor Edward Dowden has recently done. (*Vide*: "The Case against Goethe," a paper read before the English Goethe Society on May 1st, 1896, and published in *Cosmopolis* the following month.) The "aggressive zeal of scepticism," with which Professor Dowden would have us promote the faith in his hero, is, in my opinion, hardly calculated to disperse the cloud of distrust which, as he points out, has gathered around Goethe. At the meeting of the E.G.S. the address was, it seems, followed by

It is Goethe's misfortune with posterity, that he is unfortunately nearly always present to the minds of his readers as the calm old sage of Weimar, seldom as the glorious youth. Before concluding this Introduction, I will quote an anecdote concerning him, as related by Gleim, in order to give a characteristic glimpse of the young Goethe. It was about 1776.

"Soon after Goethe had written *Werther*, I came to Weimar, and wished to know him. I had brought with me the last *Musen Almanach*, a literary novelty, and read here and there a poem to the company in which I passed the evening. While I was reading, a young man, booted and spurred, in a short green shooting-jacket thrown open, came in and mingled with the audience. I had scarcely remarked his entrance. He sat down opposite to me and listened attentively. I scarcely knew what there was about him that particularly struck me, except a pair of brilliant black Italian eyes. But it was decreed that I should know more of him.

"During a short pause, in which some ladies and gentlemen were discussing the merits of the pieces I had read, lauding some and censuring others, the gallant young sportsman (for such I took him to be) arose from his chair, and bowing with a most courteous and ingratiating air to me, offered to relieve me from time to time in reading, lest I should be tired. I could do no less than accept so vigorous replies from some of the members present. But the fact remains that the address has appeared in print by itself, and cannot but cause many who read it to form erroneous ideas concerning Goethe.

polite an offer, and immediately handed him the book. But oh! Apollo and all ye Muses—not forgetting the Graces—what was I then to hear? At first, indeed, things went on smoothly enough :

‘ Die Zephyr’n lauschten,
Die Bäche rauschten,
Die Sonne
Verbreitet ihr Licht mit Wonne ’——

the somewhat more solid, substantial fare of Voss, Stolberg, and Bürger was delivered in such a manner that no one had any reason to complain.

“ All at once, however, it was as if some wild and wanton devil had taken possession of the young reader, and I thought I saw the Wild Huntsman bodily before me. He read some poems that had no existence in the *Almanach*; broke out into all possible modes and dialects. Hexameters, iambs, doggerel verses one after another, or blended in strange confusion, came tumbling out in torrents. What wild and humorous fancies did he not combine that evening! Amidst them came such noble, magnificent thoughts, thrown in detached and fitting, that the authors to whom he ascribed them must have thanked God on their knees if they had fallen upon their desks.

“ As soon as the joke was discovered, universal merriment spread through the room. He put everybody present out of countenance in one way or the other. Even my Mæcenas-ship, which I had always regarded it as a sort of duty to exercise towards young authors, poets, and artists, had its turn. Though he praised it highly on the one side, he did not forget to insinuate on the other that I claimed a sort of property in the individuals to whom I afforded

support and countenance. In a little fable composed extempore in doggerel verses, he likened me wittily enough to a worthy and most enduring turkey hen, that sits on a great heap of eggs of her own and other people's, and hatches them with infinite patience; but to whom it sometimes happens to have a chalk egg put under her instead of a real one: a trick at which she takes no offence.

"'That is either Goethe or the Devil!' cried I to Wieland, who sat opposite me. 'Both,' he replied."

In consequence of living to an unusually great age, Goethe found himself almost alone at last, all his most intimate friends having been taken from him. Schiller had already died in 1805, and his death was followed two years later by that of the Duchess Amalia. In 1816 Goethe lost his wife. In 1827 Frau von Stein died, and in the following year Goethe's dearly-beloved friend and master, the good old Duke Karl August, was no more. The year 1830 had two further deaths to record—viz., those of the Grand Duchess Luise and of Goethe's only son, who died at Rome. From this time forward Goethe, aged and alone, looked forward with calm resignation to the time when he himself should be called away. On the 15th March 1832 he took cold and became very feverish; two days later he was much better, but on the night of the 19th he awoke in great pain and with hands and feet as cold as ice. The following day he showed signs of death. His senses began to fail him and he had moments of unconsciousness. He, however still tried to read, and asked for

the names of all who had called to inquire after his health. The next morning but one—the 22nd March 1832—he tried to walk a little up and down the room, but felt too weak to do so. Meanwhile he chatted cheerfully with Otilie, his daughter-in-law, about the approaching spring, which, he thought, would be sure to restore him. The rest shall be related in Lewes' words. "The name of Otilie was frequently on his lips. She sat beside him, holding his hands in both of hers. It was now observed that his thoughts began to wander incoherently. 'See,' he exclaimed, 'the lovely woman's head—with black curls—in splendid colours—a dark background!' Presently he saw a piece of paper on the floor, and asked them how they could leave Schiller's letters so carelessly lying about. Then he slept softly, and on awaking, asked for the sketches he had just seen—the sketches of his dream. In silent anguish they awaited the close now so surely approaching. His speech was becoming less and less distinct. The last words audible were: *More light!* The final darkness grew apace, and he whose eternal longings had been for more Light, gave a parting cry for it, as he was passing under the shadow of Death.

"He continued to express himself by signs, drawing letters with his forefinger in the air, while he had strength, and finally, as life ebbed, drawing figures slowly on the shawl which covered his legs. At half-past twelve he composed himself in the corner of the chair. The watcher placed a finger on her lip

to intimate that he was asleep. If sleep it was, it was a sleep in which a life glided from the world. He woke no more."

W. B. RÖNNFELDT.

CRITICISMS, REFLECTIONS, AND
MAXIMS OF GOETHE.



GOETHE ON SHAKESPEARE.



SHAKESPEARE AND NO END.

So much has already been said about Shakespeare that it might seem as if there were nothing left for me to say. Yet it is the characteristic of the spirit ever to incite the spirit. And upon this occasion I propose to consider Shakespeare from various points of view: in the first place, as a poet in general; next, as compared with the ancients and the moderns; and, finally, as a dramatic poet in particular. I shall endeavour to explain what effect the imitation of his style has produced upon us, and what effect it is in itself capable of producing. My concurrence with the views already laid down by others, I shall express by, at any rate, repeating those views. But in cases where I differ from them, I intend to state my opinion positively, yet briefly, without involving myself in lengthy discussions and contradictions. Let us begin by considering the first point.

I.

SHAKESPEARE AS A POET IN GENERAL.

The loftiest end to which any man can attain consists in the consciousness of his own sentiments and thoughts, that knowledge of himself which enables him to obtain also an insight into the temper and frame of mind of others. Now some persons are endowed with a natural aptitude in this respect, and develop that aptitude for a practical purpose by the aid of experience. Hence they derive a capacity of acquiring something from the world and its

affairs, in the higher sense of the term. The poet, likewise, is born with that aptitude, only he does not develop it for immediate and temporal purposes, but for a loftier, spiritual, and universal purpose. And if we call Shakespeare one of the greatest poets that have ever lived, we mean to imply that scarcely any one has viewed the world as clearly as he viewed it; that among the number of those who have given expression to their inner contemplation, there is hardly one who transports himself and his readers in a higher degree into a consciousness of the world. The latter is, by him, rendered entirely transparent for us; we find ourselves all of a sudden brought face to face with virtue and vice, with greatness and meanness, with nobility and reprobateness: all this, and even more, is effected with the simplest means. But when we come to inquire into these means, it seems to us as though he appealed merely to our eyes. Such, however, is not the case; the works of Shakespeare are not designed merely for the eyes of the body. I will endeavour to explain what I mean.

The sight may perhaps be defined as the clearest of the senses, as the one which affords the readiest means of communication. But the inner sense is yet clearer, and the highest and swiftest means of communication with that sense are to be found in the speech. For when that which we would take in with our eyes stands before us, strange in itself and lacking due impressiveness, it is the faculty of speech that comes to our aid. Now Shakespeare addresses himself throughout to our inner sense; this, in turn, vivifies forthwith the picture-world of our imagination; and thus a complete effect is obtained, for which we are at a loss to account. Here lies the very cause of that illusion by which everything is represented as though it actually happened

before our eyes. But if we examine Shakespeare's pieces carefully, they will be found to contain far less of sensuous action than of spiritual word. He gives us events which may be easily imagined, nay, more, which may be better imagined than beheld. The ghost in *Hamlet*, the witches in *Macbeth*, and other fiendish creatures of a like nature derive their value from the force of the imagination, and to this alone can the effect of the manifold short and intermediate scenes be attributed. Now, in reading the plays, we pass by all these things without being much interested or affected by them; whereas on the stage they agitate and oppress us, and frequently excite our loathing.

Shakespeare affects us by means of the living word, and this may best be communicated by reading aloud: the attention of the hearer is not diverted by any representation either skillful or otherwise. There is, indeed, no higher or purer enjoyment than that which we derive from listening, with closed eyes, to a reading of a Shakespearian play. It must, however, not be declaimed, but recited in a natural and true tone of voice. We follow the even thread from which he spins the various events; as to the characters, their description, it is true, enables us to form certain conceptions of them, but it is from a series of words and speeches that we ought, properly speaking, to learn what is taking place within them. And in regard to this, it would seem as though all the characters in the play had pre-arranged not to leave our minds in doubt upon even a single point. Heroes and soldiers, monarchs and slaves, kings and messengers, all work to the same end; nay, even the subordinate characters often render greater service in this respect than the principal personages. All that is secretly floating in the air when some mighty event comes

to pass, all that lies hidden within the hearts of men at the moment of some great catastrophe, is revealed to us. That which the soul would fain conceal is here expressed freely and openly. We are taught to recognise the truth of life, and we know not how.

Shakespeare resembles the spirit of the world. Like the latter, he penetrates into its inmost recesses; from neither of them is aught concealed. But whereas the spirit of the world is appointed to preserve the secret before a certain deed, and often after it as well, it is the business of the poet to divulge the secret to us, to confide in us, before the deed, or at any rate at the time of its occurrence. The corrupt man of power; the man who means well, but who is powerless to act; he who is transported with passion; he who lives in calm contemplation—each carries his heart in his hand, often contrary to all semblance of truth; all are open and talkative. Enough, the secret will out, even if the very stones have to declare it. Nor is this all. The inanimate world, too, is called into requisition; all the subordinate forces are added, the elements, phenomena of the sky, earth and sea, thunder and lightning; fierce monsters raise their voices, often introduced figuratively, but always playing a significant part.

The civilised world is also called upon to yield its treasures. Arts and sciences, trades and handicrafts, all are brought before us. The works of Shakespeare resemble a huge, living fair; and for the wealth which they display, he is indebted to his native country.

Everywhere we behold England, the sea-girt isle, encompassed with fog and clouds, the land whose activity stretches into every quarter of the globe. The poet lived in noble and momentous times, and he has represented their develop

ment, nay, even their misdevelopment, to us with the utmost serenity. Nor would he have exercised so powerful an influence upon us, had he not made himself master of his own living times. By no one has the mere material garb or outer texture of men been held in greater disregard than by him; but he was perfectly acquainted with their inner texture, and this, after all, places all men on an equal footing. It is said that he has depicted the Romans excellently. I cannot convince myself of this. They are in reality nothing but incarnate Englishmen; but they are men, men to the core, and so the Roman toga is perhaps after all not entirely out of place. If we can only accustom ourselves once for all to regard the matter in this light, we shall find that there is much to be said in defence of his anachronisms, and that it is the very fact of his violating the rules of external costume which renders his works so life-like.

These few remarks must suffice, although they by no means exhaust the merits of Shakespeare. His friends and admirers will find much to add to them. One further observation I must, however, make here. It would be a difficult matter to name another poet, each of whose works has a different conception underlying it, such a conception, at the same time, proving effective throughout the whole piece, as we shall find to be the case if we examine the works of Shakespeare.

Thus *Coriolanus* is pervaded throughout by the chagrin experienced at the refusal of the mob to recognise the choice of its betters. In *Julius Cæsar* everything rests upon the idea that the leaders are averse to seeing the highest place filled, because they wrongly imagine that they can work successfully in co-operation. *Antony and Cleo-*

patra declares with a thousand tongues that idle enjoyment is incompatible with a life of activity. An examination of his other works will in like manner afford us ground for admiration.

II.

SHAKESPEARE AS COMPARED WITH THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS.

The interest which animates Shakespeare's colossal intellect is to be found within the world itself. Vaticination and madness, dreams and presentiments, prodigies, fairies and sprites, apparitions, fiends and sorcerers, do, it is true, form a magic element which he introduces into his pieces on suitable occasions. Yet these creations of the fancy by no means form the chief ingredients of his plays; it is the truth and solidity of his life that go to make up the grand basis upon which they rest. This is the reason why everything that comes from his pen appears to us so genuine and full of force. As has already been pointed out, too, we can hardly class him with the poets of that modern world which is known as the romantic, but must rather include him amongst the artless or unaffected school, since his value rests mainly upon the present and he but rarely borders upon the side of tenderness, upon *Sehnsucht*, and then only touches the outer fringe, as it were.

Nevertheless, if we examine him more closely, we shall find him to be a decidedly modern poet separated from the ancients by a wide gap, not only in respect of external form, which need not be here taken into account, but also as regards the profound inner significance.

And here I have first of all to remark that it is nowise my intention to employ the following terms as being fully

concise and determinative; on the contrary, they must merely serve as an attempt to add one more antithesis to those with which we are already familiar, or, more correctly speaking, to point out that it is already included in their number. The antitheta are :

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| Antique. | Modern. |
| Naïve. | Sentimental. |
| Pagan. | Christian. |
| Heroic. | Romantic. |
| Real. | Ideal. |
| Necessity. | Freedom. |
| Constraint. | Inclination. ¹ |

The greatest miseries, as also the most frequent, which fall to the lot of man, arise from the disproportion, common to all men, firstly between their constraints and their inclinations, and then between their constraints and their achievements, and between their inclinations and their achievements. These are the causes which so often in the course of our lives perplex us and place us in a dilemma. The smallest difficulty resulting from some trivial error, which might easily be rectified without much thought and thus prevent further harm, gives rise to comical situations. The greatest difficulty, on the other hand, whether unsolved or unsolvable, leads to situations of tragic moment.

The prominent characteristic of the poems of the ancients is the disproportion between the constraint and the achievement. Those of the moderns are distinguished by the disproportion between the inclination and the achievement.

¹ The last pair of antitheta, Constraint and Inclination, are in German *Sollen* and *Wollen* respectively. The nearest literal rendering would be the Must and the Will, but it is impossible to translate the terms exactly.—TR.

Leaving the other antitheta aside for the moment, let us confine our attention to this important difference and see how it may be applied. I have said that at the earlier period the one characteristic predominated, and at the later the other. But since the constraints of men cannot be radically separated from their inclinations, it follows that both of the above-mentioned characteristics will at all times be found to coexist, though the one may be predominant and the other subordinate. A man's constraints are forced upon him; "must" is a hard nut to crack: but his inclinations he imposes on himself; a man's will is his bliss. A perpetual constraint is burdensome; the inability to achieve one's end is distressing: a constant inclination is pleasing and a firm will may even render a man oblivious of his inability to achieve the end at which he is aiming.

Look upon games of cards as a kind of poetry, and you will find that these also are composed of those two characteristics. The form of the game, combined with the element of chance, here takes the place of the constraint, in the same way as the ancients recognised it in the form of Fate; and the inclination, coupled with the player's ability, runs counter to it. In this sense I should call the game of Whist antique. Its form limits the element of chance, nay, even the inclination. With a given partner and adversaries, I have, by means of the cards which are dealt to me, to retain the command over a series of chances, without being able to avoid them. In *l'Hombre* and similar games the contrary may be observed. Here my inclination and enterprise are allowed abundant opportunity; I am at liberty to reject the cards which fall to my share, I can attach a different value to them, discard them in part or entirely, and call fortune to my aid; nay more, through an opposite

mode of procedure I may derive the greatest advantage from the worst cards. Thus it will be seen that games of this kind form an exact counterpart to the modern style of thought and poetry.

Ancient tragedy is founded upon the idea of an inevitable obligation or constraint, which an inclination working in an opposite direction only serves to intensify and to accelerate. Here lies the key to all those dread decrees of the oracles, a region in which *Œdipus* reigns supreme. In the *Antigone* the constraint is less severe and has the appearance of a duty. What a variety of forms it assumes in its numerous changes! But every constraint is despotic, be it the offspring of reason, as exemplified in moral and civil law, or of nature, as displayed in the laws of birth, growth, and dissolution, of life and death. All this makes us shudder until we reflect that the good of the whole is the object in view. The will or inclination, on the contrary, is free; it appears free, and favours the individual. Hence it is flattering to us, and men fall beneath its sway as soon as they become acquainted with it. It is the latter-day god; and having resigned ourselves to him, we are afraid of facing his opposite. This is the reason why our art, as also our mode of thought and feeling, will ever remain distinct from those of the ancients. It is the constraint which renders tragedy great and powerful; it is the inclination which renders it weak and petty. And finally there originated that so-called drama, in which a tremendous constraint is solved by a strong inclination; but this has only served to confirm us in our weakness, and, after painful suspense, but scant consolation is sufficient to move us.

If, after these preliminary reflections, I turn once more to Shakespeare, I am prompted to hope that my readers may

of themselves institute the comparison and the application. Shakespeare here appears in a unique light, inasmuch as he combines the characteristics of the ancients and the moderns in a surprising degree. Throughout his plays he endeavours to preserve a balance between the constraint and the inclination, both of which keenly contend for the mastery, yet always in such a way that the inclination is left at a disadvantage.

Probably no one has depicted with more success than Shakespeare the first great conflict of constraint and inclination in the character of the individual. Regarded from the side of character, a person *must* take a certain course; he is circumscribed, and has to perform some special task. But as a man, he has his inclinations: he knows no bounds, and claims the universe for his own. Thus there at once arises an internal conflict, and it is to this conflict, before all others, that Shakespeare gives special prominence. Another conflict, an external one, is moreover added, and this latter is frequently rendered the more intense through an inadequate inclination being forced, from various causes, to seek to hold its own against an incessant constraint. This principle I have on a previous occasion traced in *Hamlet*. It is, however, to be found repeatedly in Shakespeare. For, as the ghost forces Hamlet, so do the witches, Hecate, and that arch-witch, his wife, force Macbeth, and Brutus' friends force Brutus, into a dilemma with which they are unable to cope. Nay, even in *Coriolanus* we may observe the same feature. Enough; an inclination which surpasses the strength of the individual is essentially a modern feature. But with Shakespeare, instead of being brought about by internal motives, it proceeds from external causes; it is thus converted into a kind of constraint, and approaches

more closely to the antique. For all the heroes of poetic antiquity aim only at such ends as are capable of achievement by human beings, and this is the reason why we there find the inclination, constraint, and achievement so happily balanced against one another. Only the ancients invariably present the constraint in too bold a light to win our interest, even though it awaken our admiration. A constraint which partly or entirely excludes the sense of freedom is to-day no longer in accord with our temperament. Yet Shakespeare, in his own way, has more or less approached it; for by representing the constraint of such a nature as to awaken our interest, he has succeeded in uniting the old and the new world, to our delight and astonishment. If there is anything to be learnt from him, this is the point which we ought to study. Our Romanticism may not be deserving of censure, of being cast aside altogether. But instead of praising it exclusively and to an immoderate degree, and addicting ourselves to it in a one-sided fashion (whereby its strong, wholesome, and solid side is misunderstood and neglected), we should rather try and reconcile within our own minds that great and seemingly irreconcilable contrast; and we should be all the more eager to do so, seeing that a great and unique master, whom we value so highly and are ever ready to praise, often without knowing the reason why, has actually achieved this wonder already. He enjoyed, it is true, the advantage of coming at the proper harvest-time, and it was given to him to work in a Protestant country full of life and activity, a country in which the voice of bigotry was silent for a considerable time, so that a true and pious child of nature, such as Shakespeare, was allowed to develop religiously his pure inmost gifts, without regard for any one particular creed.

The preceding words were written in the summer of 1813, and I do not now intend to modify or criticise them in any way, but would merely remind my readers of what I have already pointed out—viz., that this essay is, so to speak, an isolated endeavour to show how the various poetic geniuses have, each in his own way, sought to reconcile and solve that momentous contrast presenting itself, as it does, in so many different forms. To add anything further would be the more unnecessary, as, since the date referred to, public attention has been called to this question, on all sides, with the result that we have received some remarkable criticisms upon it. The contributions to which I attach the greatest importance in this respect are Blümner's invaluable treatise upon *The Idea of Fate as displayed in the Tragedies of Æschylus*, and an excellent review of the same contained in the supplement of the *Jena Literary Journal* for 1815, Numbers 12 and 13. I shall therefore proceed at once to the third point, which has a direct bearing upon the German stage, as also upon that plan which Schiller undertook, of giving it a firm basis for the future.

III.

SHAKESPEARE AS A DRAMATIC POET.

Friends and lovers of art, if they wish to derive full enjoyment from any work, endeavour to enjoy it as a whole and to appreciate to the full that unity with which the artist may have been able to invest it. For those, on the other hand, who would speak theoretically regarding such a work, who would record their observations upon it, and, consequently, impart information and instruction, it becomes a duty to review that work in its separate parts. This duty

we deemed ourselves to have fulfilled in considering Shakespeare, firstly, as a poet in general, and secondly, in comparison with the ancients and the moderns. We now purpose bringing our essay to a close by considering him as a dramatic poet.

The fame and merits of Shakespeare belong to the history of poetry; but to place his whole merits on record in the history of the theatre would be an injustice towards all the dramatic poets of earlier and later times.

A universally recognised talent may make a problematical use of its capacities. Not everything which is performed by the man of excellent parts is performed in the most excellent manner. Thus Shakespeare belongs by rights to the history of poetry; in the history of the theatre he only appears casually. Because in the former he is entitled to unbounded honour, it does not necessarily follow that in the latter we can neglect to weigh the conditions to which he subjected himself, or that they are to be held up as patterns or models.

We distinguish various closely allied forms of poetry, which, in their treatment, often verge upon one another. The epic, the dialogue, the drama, and the stage-play are all of them distinguishable from one another. An *Epic* requires verbal delivery to the many by means of the individual; a *Dialogue*, discourse among a set number of persons; a *Drama*, discourse by means of actions, even though it be only conducted before the imagination; a *Stage-play*, all the three combined, in so far as it also appeals to the sense of sight and may be rendered comprehensible under certain local and personal conditions.

It is in *this* sense that the works of Shakespeare may be most fitly described as being dramatic. His mode of

treatment, his method of laying bare the innermost secrets of life, are the means whereby he wins the favour of his readers. The requirements of the theatre appear to him of no moment, so he simply disregards them; a course which his hearers are, intellectually speaking, inclined to sanction. We hurry with him from place to place; our imagination supplies any intermediate events which he may have omitted; nay more, we are indebted to him for affording us the opportunity of exercising our mental faculties in so worthy a manner. By representing everything in a theatrical form, he renders more easy the task which is left to the imagination. For we are better acquainted with those boards that signify the world than with the world itself. We find delight in reading or hearing of the strangest marvels, and our fancy tells us that the same things may perchance one day come to pass before our very eyes. This fact accounts for the so frequently unsuccessful adaptation of popular novels for the stage.

Strictly speaking, however, nothing is theatrical but that which is at the same time symbolic to the eye—an important action which points to one of still greater importance. As a proof, to show that Shakespeare was a master also in this respect, I refer my readers to that moment in which the prince, who is heir to the throne, takes up the crown that is lying by his father's side; the dying king is asleep, and the prince, placing the crown upon his own head, struts about, filled with pride.¹ But such traits are few and far between; they are scattered jewels, and are divided from one another by much that is untheatrical. Shakespeare's whole method of proceeding is one which encounters a certain amount of impracticability upon the

¹ *King Henry VI.*, Pt. II., Act iv., Sc. 3.

actual stage. His great talent is that of an epitomiser; and since the poet, as such, appears before us as an epitomiser of nature, we cannot but recognise Shakespeare's transcendent merit in this respect also. Only, in so doing, we would deny, and that, be it said, to his honour, that the stage has afforded a worthy field for his genius. Why, the very contractedness of the stage forces him to circumscribe himself! Yet instead of following the example of other poets and selecting special materials for each individual work, he chooses some general idea for his central point, and then proceeds to fill in his circle by drawing the world and the universe at large within its circumference. His method of curtailing and condensing ancient and modern history enables him to utilise the materials of any chronicle which he may chance to come across. Indeed, he frequently gives us a word-for-word rendering. With regard to romances he does not exhibit the same scrupulousness, as may be seen from his *Hamlet*. In *Romeo and Juliet* he adheres somewhat more closely to his original; yet here he comes nigh to marring the tragic tenor of the play altogether, by introducing two comic figures, Mercutio and the nurse, whose parts were probably played by two popular actors, that of the nurse being perhaps allotted to a male person. Upon carefully examining the economy of this play, it will be observed that these two figures, including whatever else is connected with them, are introduced merely as comic supernumeraries, and must, on the stage, appear intolerable to any one who is accustomed to think in a consequential manner and who looks for harmony and consistence.

But it is when revising and curtailing already existing pieces that Shakespeare appears in the most curious light.

In the case of *King John* and of *Lear* we are able to institute a comparison, for the older pieces are still extant. But in these plays he again comes before us as a poet in general, rather than as a theatrical poet.

And now, in conclusion, let us proceed to the solution of the problem. The imperfections of the English stage have been clearly pointed out to us by able authorities. We there find no trace of those pretensions to natural and life-like effects to which the gradual improvements in machinery, the art of perspective, and stage accessories have taught us to aspire, and from which we should with difficulty consent to return to our earlier, crude attempts. In the olden days it was the custom to have a rude, unfinished stage, where but little was to be seen and where every object only served to *indicate* something else. Then the spectators were content to believe that behind a green curtain there was the king's chamber; they were satisfied with the trumpeter who would always blow his trumpet at a certain given moment; and so forth. Who is there among us that would put up with this sort of thing nowadays? Under such circumstances Shakespeare's plays formed highly interesting tales, with this peculiarity—viz., that they were narrated by several persons. In order to produce a somewhat stronger impression, these persons assumed characteristic disguises, and moved to and fro, and came and went, according to the requirements of the piece. But it was left to the spectators to imagine that the bare stage represented a paradise, a palace, or anything else, as the case might be.

How did Schröder¹ manage to achieve so great a

¹ Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744-1829), a celebrated German actor.

distinction in introducing Shakespeare's plays upon the German stage, if it was not by becoming the epitomiser of the epitomiser? Schröder limited himself to that which he deemed effective; all the rest he cast aside; nay more, he occasionally even went so far as to reject matter that was essential to the unity of the piece, if it seemed to him to interfere with the influence which he wanted to produce upon his nation and age. Thus, for example, it is true that by omitting the first scene of *King Lear*, he marred the character of the play. Nevertheless, he was quite justified in so doing: for in that scene Lear appears so irrational that we cannot altogether blame his daughters for the consequences. The old man moves us, but we do not feel pity for him; and pity was just what Schröder wanted to inspire, together with a hatred of the two daughters, whose conduct was indeed unnatural, yet not wholly deserving of reproach.

In the older play which Shakespeare has revised, this scene gives rise to the most delightful effects in the subsequent course of the piece. Lear flies to France. His daughter and son-in-law, prompted by some romantic caprice, make a pilgrimage in disguise to the seashore, and encounter the old man, who, however, does not recognise them. Here delightfulness takes the place of that which the lofty, tragic spirit of Shakespeare has imbittered for us. A comparison of the two plays will provide the thoughtful lover of art with a continual supply of fresh points of interest.

For many years past the opinion has prevailed in Germany that Shakespeare ought to be performed word for word upon the German stage, at whatever cost to the actor and to the spectator. Various attempts, induced by

an excellent and exact translation, failed altogether to prove successful, as may best be gathered from the honest and repeated endeavours made upon the Weimar stage. If we would witness a Shakespearian play, we must again have recourse to Schröder's adaptation : yet we continue to hear the time-worn and unreasonable remark, that in performing a Shakespearian play not an iota must be omitted. Should those who advocate this view retain the upper hand, Shakespeare will, in the course of a few years, be banished entirely from the German stage.¹ Nor would this be an unmixed misfortune ; for his readers, whether solitary or social, would derive all the purer pleasure from him.

¹ See p. 45.

THE FIRST EDITION OF "HAMLET."¹

To all who are passionate admirers of Shakespeare this work will prove a valuable gift. A first, unbiassed perusal of it wrought a strange influence upon me. It was the same time-honoured old work; its tendency was nowise changed; the most profound and effective passages were left unaltered by the master-hand. The play afforded exceedingly pleasant reading and presented no harsh contrasts; it was as though one found oneself in a world with which one is perfectly familiar. Yet, in spite of this, I experienced a somewhat strange sensation which I found myself unable to express. I was therefore induced to make a closer examination of the work, and to compare the two versions more carefully with one another. The following are briefly a few of the points which occurred to me.

In the first place, it will be noticed that in the original edition no locality is indicated, and that nothing is said with regard to stage decorations; nor is there any division into acts and scenes. *Enter* and *exit* have to fulfil all requirements. The imagination has free scope, and should be satisfied with the plain old English stage; there the play runs its proper course full of passion and unhindered, and no one has leisure to ponder over localities.

But in the newer edition, with which we have so long been familiar, we find the play divided into acts and scenes;

¹ The first edition of *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare. London, 1603. Reprinted by Fleischer, Leipzig, 1825.

the localities and decorations, too, are mentioned. Whether these additions were made by the author or were the work of subsequent commentators, we will not attempt to decide.

Polonius, in the second version, is called Corambis in the first, and even this trifling detail seems to impart a different character to the *rôle*.

The insignificant minor characters, which have hardly anything to say, were originally denoted by means of figures; in the later version we find them raised to honour and importance, and invested with names. This reminds us of Schiller, who, in his *Tell*, gave names to the peasant-women, and also allotted them a few words, so as to render the parts acceptable. Shakespeare here adopts a like plan with regard to his officers and courtiers.

Whereas in the first edition the metre is but loosely indicated, we find it in the subsequent one as a rule clearly defined, yet free from any trace of laboured ostentation; the rhythmical passages in pentameter iambs are divided from the rest, though we occasionally meet with an incomplete line.

So much for the more obvious points of external form. As regards the internal relations, a careful reader will readily be able to institute a comparison between them for himself. I will therefore throw out merely a few hints here.

noticeable, yet very sprightly aspersions; easy and adroit connecting traits; nay, even important transpositions designed to render the representation more effective. Taken as a whole, the play is a masterly and skilful work, abounding in feeling; everything in it tends to engage our emotions and to enlighten our mode of contemplation.

We especially admire the compactness of the earlier work. Like a striking and effective invention, it seems to have been cast into shape extemporaneously and without pre-meditation. Whatever improvements the poet subsequently effected in his work, whatever modifications he thought proper to introduce into it, we nowhere discern any actual falling off, any omission or alteration of importance. He merely left out here and there a few rather too harsh and ingenuous traits.

In conclusion, we would call attention to a remarkable diversity in the attire of the Ghost. He first of all appears, as we know him, armed from head to foot, with his beaver up; his countenance is solemn and sorrowful, very pale, and his gaze is sharp and unflinching. Thus it is that he appears upon the platform where the officers of the castle are keeping watch, and where he himself may oftentimes have mustered his soldiers.

When the scene is changed to the Queen's closet, we behold mother and son engaged in the famous interview which leads to the well-known words :

Queen. O Hamlet, thou has cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half."

Who can read this without experiencing a momentary shock, without receiving a sensation of incongruity? And yet, when we come to examine it more closely and to reflect upon it, we find that there is after all no ground for any such feeling. The Ghost first of all comes before us in full armour. He is bound to do so, since he had to appear in the place where he had erstwhile assembled his troops and exhorted them to deeds of prowess. And now we begin to wonder why we should so long have deemed it fitting for him to enter the queen's closet likewise in full^c armour. How much more secret, homely, and awe-inspiring he now seems, as he enters in that same guise which he was formerly wont to assume! We behold him in undress, in his night-gown; he is harmless and unarmed, and denounces, in piteous tones, the foul and treacherous crime perpetrated against him. Let the intelligent reader picture this scene to himself as his fancy may direct; and let a management, convinced of its effectiveness, be bold enough to place it upon the stage, if Shakespeare is to be performed in his entirety.

It may be added that in this scene Steevens, the commentator, already finds food for reflection. When Hamlet says:

"My father, in his habit as he lived!"

that intelligent critic adds a note to the effect that, if, by using this expression, the poet intends to convey that the father appeared in his proper domestic attire, he must either have overlooked the fact that at the beginning of the play he was made to appear in full armour, or else it was his object to vary his attire in this his final appearance. Hamlet's father, however warlike a prince he may have

been, was certainly not always clad in armour; nor did he sleep with his battle axe in his hand, as we read of Hago, King of Norway.

Moreover, if we were sufficiently quick-sighted, we might gather this conclusion from the first exclamation which Hamlet addresses to the Ghost in this scene:

"What would your gracious figure?"

Words would fail to express adequately the idea of pleasure and charm which the English understand by the term "gracious": all that is clement and kind, friendly and indulgent, all that affects us in a manner savouring of tenderness and benevolence, is included in that one word. Surely this is not the way in which one would address a hero clad in armour.

Doubts upon this and other points have fortunately been dispelled for us by the reprint of the first edition; and we are once more brought to the conviction that Shakespeare, like the universe which he has represented for us, ever continues to afford us fresh points of view, and yet, in the end, remains inscrutable. For, whatsoever our powers, we are all of us unable to fathom him either in the letter or in the spirit.

ON "HAMLET."

. . . I CANNOT call to mind any book, any person, or any occurrence in life which has produced so great an effect upon me as those excellent plays of Shakespeare, with which, through your kindness, I have become acquainted. They seem to be the work of a heavenly genius, who has descended to mankind in order to make it, in the gentlest manner possible, familiar with itself. They are not mere poems. You imagine yourself to be standing before the opened, mighty books of Destiny, through which the whirlwind of impassioned life is raging, whilst the leaves are swiftly agitated to and fro! The strength and the tenderness, the power and the repose, have so astonished me and wrought upon my feelings that I can only long for the time when I shall be enabled to peruse them further. . . . I wish that I could explain to you all that is at present going on within me. Every presentiment which I have ever experienced with respect to humanity and its destinies, and which, from my childhood onwards, I have entertained in the secrecy of my soul, I find fulfilled and developed in the plays of Shakespeare. It seems as if he had solved every problem for us, even though one cannot say: here, or there, lies the actual word of solution. His persons appear to be natural human beings, and yet they are not so. Those most wonderful and complex creations of nature live and move before us in his plays, as though they were so many watches with their dial-plates and cases of glass; they duly

. . .

indicate the course of the hours, and we are at the same time enabled to behold the wheels and springs by which they are kept in motion. The few glances which I have cast into the world of Shakespeare impel me more than ever to advance with swifter strides in the world of active life, to mingle in the flood of Destiny which courses through it, and at some later time, if I should be so fortunate, to fill a few goblets from the deep tide of true nature and distribute them from the stage to the thirsting people of my fatherland.

You are acquainted with Shakespeare's incomparable *Hamlet*, from a reading which gave you a great deal of delight when we were still at the castle. We made up our minds to perform the piece; and I, not knowing what I was about, had chosen the part of the Prince. I thought I could learn it by first of all committing to memory the most powerful passages, the soliloquies, and those scenes in which force of soul, elevation of spirit, and vehemence are allowed free scope; where the restless mind can display itself with affecting expressiveness.

I moreover imagined that I should enter properly into the spirit of the part by taking upon myself, so to speak, the load of deep melancholy, and, thus oppressed, trying to follow my prototype through the strange labyrinth of his many humours and singularities.

In this way, then, I practised and committed my part to memory, thinking that in course of time I should gradually succeed in identifying myself with my hero.

But the farther I proceeded, the greater difficulty I encountered in retaining a broad conception of the whole, until at last it appeared to me almost impossible to

such a conception. Thereupon I went through the play in an uninterrupted course, and here again I noted with regret that there was much which I could not grasp. Now the characters, now their expression, seemed contradictory, and I almost despaired of hitting off the proper tone in which I ought to declaim my whole part with all its varieties of light and shade. Long I wrestled with these perplexities and all in vain, until at length a new method seemed to hold out hopes to me of attaining my aim.

I set myself to examine every indication which I could find of Hamlet's character in early times, previous to his father's death. I noted what this interesting youth had been apart from that sad occurrence and from the fearful consequences which ensued; I pictured to myself what he might perhaps have become without them.

Of delicate and noble birth, this royal flower had bloomed under the direct influence of majesty. A regard for virtue, a perception of his princely worth, an appreciation of all that was good and dignified, together with a consciousness of his exalted birth, were developed in him simultaneously. He was a prince, a hereditary prince, and only wanted to rule so that good men might without hindrance continue in their goodness. Pleasing in appearance, refined by nature, and kind-hearted, he was to be a model for youth and the joy of the world.

Free from any warm passion, his love for Ophelia was the silent expression of his gentle desires. His zeal for knightly pursuits was not altogether natural to him; indeed it required the praises bestowed upon a rival in order to excite this taste in him and to keep it alive. The purity of his own thoughts enabled him to recognise what was honourable in others, and he knew the value of that repose

which an upright mind enjoys in the confidence of a friend. In the arts and sciences he had to a certain extent learnt to appreciate and respect what was good and true. Vulgarity was offensive to him; and if within his tender soul hatred could find a place, it was only that he might despise false and fickle courtiers and render them the subjects of derision. He was quiet in his demeanour, simple in his manners, neither satisfied with idleness nor over-eager for occupation. He seemed, moreover, to retain his easy-going academical habits at the court. His mirth was that of humour rather than of heart. He was a good companion, deferential, discreet, and heedful; he could forgive and forget an injury; but he could never bring himself to tolerate those who overstepped the bounds of honesty, propriety, and virtue.

. . . Picture to yourselves a prince, such as I have described him, whose father dies unexpectedly. Ambition and the love of dominion are not the passions by which he is beset. He was content to be the son of a king; but now he is for the first time compelled to pay more regard to the distinction between a king and a subject. His right to the throne was not hereditary; yet, had his father lived longer, the claims of an only son would have been further strengthened and his hopes of the crown assured. As it is, however, he now finds himself excluded from the throne, perchance for ever, by his uncle, despite the specious promises of the latter. He is become poor both in fortune and in favour, and a stranger in that very place which, from his youth onwards, he had regarded as his own. It is at this stage that his thoughts for the first time assume a tinge of melancholy. He feels that now he is no more, nay, rather

something less, than a private nobleman; he looks upon himself as the servant of every one. He is no longer courteous and condescending, but degraded and needy.

His former condition appears to him merely like some vanished dream. In vain does his uncle attempt to console him by setting forth his position in a different light; the consciousness of his own nothingness will not leave him.

The second blow which struck him inflicted a deeper wound and left him yet more prostrated. This was the marriage of his mother. When his father died, he, a dutiful and gentle son, still retained a mother; in the company of this noble and widowed mother he hoped to cherish and revere the memory of that great, departed hero, his father. But now his mother also is lost to him, and that, too, through a blow more cruel than if death had parted them. That hopeful picture which an affectionate child loves to form of his parents is dissolved for ever; the dead can afford him no aid, in the living he finds no constancy. She too is a woman; and under the name of Frailty, which covers all her sex, she too is included.

Now for the first time he is utterly dejected; now for the first time he feels himself an orphan; and no joy on earth can ever restore to him that of which he has been bereft. For one who is not by nature either sorrowful or reflective, sorrow and reflection now become a heavy burden. It is at this point that he appears before us. In thus describing him I do not think that I have added anything to his character which does not belong to it, or laid undue stress upon any single feature.

Picture this youth, this royal prince, vividly to yourselves; think of his condition, and then watch him as he learns that

his father's spirit has been seen. Accompany him on that dreadful night when the awe-inspiring ghost appears before him. A horrible fear seizes him; he addresses the mysterious phantom; it beckons to him, whereupon he follows it and hears its tale. The terrible charge against his uncle resounds in his ears, followed by a summons to avenge his murder and the parting words of the Ghost: "Hamlet, remember me."

But when the Ghost has disappeared, whom have we left standing before us? A young hero thirsting for revenge? * A prince by birth, who glories in being called upon to challenge the usurper of his crown? No! Amazement and perplexity overtake the lonely prince; he vents the bitterness of his soul against smiling villains, swears that he will never forget the departed spirit, and ends by uttering those mournful words of regret:

"The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"

In these words, I think, lies the key to Hamlet's whole course of conduct. It is quite clear to me that what Shakespeare wished to portray was this: a great task imposed upon a soul which is incompetent to perform that task. And in this sense I find the whole play conceived and developed. Here we have an oak, planted in a costly vase, within which beautiful flowers alone should have found a place; the roots of the tree expand, and the vase is shattered.

A lovable, pure, noble and highly moral being, devoid of the force of will that goes to the making of a hero, is crushed beneath a load which he is unable either to bear or to cast off. Every duty is sacred to him; this one alone

lies beyond his powers. He is called upon to do the impossible; not that which is impossible in itself, but that which is impossible for him. And he turns and winds about in his anxiety, now advancing and now receding, ever reminded of the past both from without and from within, until at length he almost loses sight of his original purpose, without, however, regaining any of his lost happiness and peace of mind!

Of Ophelia there is not much to be said, for her character is drawn with but a few master-strokes. Her whole existence flows in sweet and ripe sensation. Her inclination towards the Prince, to whose hand she may aspire, is developed so spontaneously, her affectionate heart yields so entirely to its impulse, that both her father and her brother are afraid; they both give her a plain and open warning. Decorum, like the thin crape upon her bosom, fails to hide the gentle motions of her heart; on the contrary, it rather serves to betray them. Her imagination is inflamed, her timid modesty breathes a sweet desire, and, should that easy goddess, Opportunity, but shake the tree, the fruit would quickly fall.

And when she finds herself forsaken, rejected and despised; when everything is overturned in the mind of her distracted lover, and, instead of the sweet cup of affection, he proffers her the bitter draught of sorrow—her heart breaks; the entire edifice of her being is forced out of joint; her father's death follows close upon this; and the beautiful structure falls together with a crash.

Various doubts have occurred to me, which would seem to injure to a large extent the canonical view from which we

are inclined to regard the play. Even the English themselves have admitted that the main interest closes with the third act, and that the two remaining acts serve but indifferently to keep the whole story together; indeed, towards the end the play becomes very heavy and begins to drag.

It is quite possible that some individuals of a nation which has so many masterpieces to show us, may be misled by prejudice or narrowness of vision into forming erroneous opinions. But this should not prevent us from using our own eyes and judging with fairness. Far from finding fault with the construction of this play, I even venture to believe that a greater one has never been devised. Nay more, this play has not been devised; it is nature itself. . . .

. . . We are pleased and flattered when we behold a hero who relies upon himself, who loves and hates as his heart impels him, who undertakes and executes, removes every obstacle, and finally attains some great end. Historians and poets would fain teach us that so proud a destiny could fall to the lot of man. But here we are taught a different lesson. The hero is without a plan, but not so the play. We do not here see a villain punished by cold and deliberate designs of vengeance. No; a fearful crime is perpetrated; it draws everything with it, and bears even the guiltless along in its train; the culprit would avoid the abyss which awaits him; yet, just as he thinks that he has found some happy means of escape, down he falls headlong. For it is in the nature of crime to bring harm also to those who are innocent, just as it is in the nature of virtue to extend blessings also to the undeserving, whilst the authors of both often go unpunished and unrewarded,

How admirably do we find this exemplified in our play! The infernal regions send forth a spirit to demand vengeance, but in vain. All the circumstances conspire to invoke revenge, but to no purpose. No power either earthly or unearthly can execute that which is reserved for Fate alone. The hour of judgment arrives: the good and the bad fall together; a whole race is mowed down, and another springs up in its place.

Ought not the poet, it may be asked, to have written songs of a different kind for the mad Ophelia? Would it not be better to select a few snatches from some melancholy ballads? Why place ambiguous expressions and indelicate allusions in the mouth of this noble-minded girl? . . .

. . . Even on this point I cannot yield one iota. These very peculiarities, this seeming impropriety, betray a profound meaning. Early in the play we know already what is occupying the mind of the poor child. She was pursuing her own course in silence and secrecy, without being able to wholly conceal her longing and desires. In her heart of hearts she could hear the secret whispers of desire, and no doubt she often tried, like an incautious nurse, to lull her senses to repose with songs which could not but arouse them the more. And when, at last, all her self-control is at an end and the secrets of her heart are upon her tongue, that tongue betrays her, and in the innocence of her madness she finds delight, even in the presence of the King and Queen, in singing her loose, but favourite, ditties of the maid whose heart was won, of the maid who stole forth to meet the youth, and so on.

After the most careful investigation and mature reflection,

I can make two divisions in the composition of this play. First of all we have the principal internal relations of the persons and incidents, the powerful effects which proceed from the characters and actions of the chief figures. These are excellent, and the order in which they are arranged does not admit of any improvement. They must not be interfered with, nor must they even be changed in form. They are excellences which every one desires to behold, and which no one should presume to touch; they make a deep impression on the soul, and have for the most part, I am told, been also introduced upon the German stage. The only fault has, I believe, consisted in not regarding with sufficient importance the second feature which this play presents. I allude to the external incidents whereby the persons are brought from place to place or become united in various ways by certain accidental circumstances. These have been wholly omitted, or, at all events, considered unimportant. It is true that these threads are somewhat slack and delicate, but they run through the entire play and serve to unite that which would otherwise be wholly disconnected, and which actually does become so when they are severed and it is considered sufficient to leave the ends remaining.

Among these external incidents I would include the disturbances in Norway, the war with young Fortinbras, the embassy to his aged uncle, the adjusted feud, young Fortinbras' expedition to Poland and his subsequent return; likewise the return of Horatio from Wittenberg, Hamlet's desire to proceed thither, Laertes' journey to France, his return, the despatch of Hamlet to England, his capture by pirates, and the death of the two courtiers by means of the Uriah-letter. All these incidents might well serve to swell

a novel, but they seriously disturb and mar the unity of this play, in which, as it is, the hero acts without any determined plan. . . . These defects resemble the temporary supports of a building, which must not be removed until a firm substructure has been built as a substitute. In performing the play, I should therefore propose not to alter the grand situations in any way, or, at any rate, to leave them individually and collectively as far as possible just as they are. But all those external and disturbing motives I would reject straightway, substituting a single one in their stead. . . . There is already such a one in the play; only I would make a proper use of it. I allude to the disturbances in Norway. I will endeavour to explain the plan which I suggest.

After the death of the elder Hamlet, the lately subjugated Norwegians grow discontented. The ruler of that country sends his son Horatio to Denmark. The latter had been a former schoolfellow of Hamlet, and had excelled all his contemporaries in prudence and valour. He is sent to expedite the preparation of the fleet, which had made but slow progress under the administration of the new king, who was devoted to revelry. Horatio had known the former king, having been present at his last battles, and had been counted among his favourites—events which could nowise impair the effect of the Ghost's appearance in the first scene. Then the new king receives Horatio, and despatches Laertes to Norway with tidings that the fleet will soon arrive, Horatio in the meantime receiving instructions to hasten the preparations. The Queen-mother, on the other hand, will not allow Hamlet to proceed to sea with Horatio, as he desires.

It will readily be seen how I can now preserve the con-

tinuity of the rest of the story. When Hamlet discloses his stepfather's crime to Horatio, the latter counsels him to join the expedition to Norway, to ingratiate himself with the army, and to return at their head. Meanwhile Hamlet is becoming a source of danger to the King and Queen, and they can devise no better means of getting rid of him than by sending him away to the fleet, accompanied by Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern, who are told off to watch his movements. Laertes having by this time returned, they resolve that that youth, whose exasperation threatens to impel him to murder, is to be sent after him. The fleet is detained owing to adverse winds, and Hamlet once more returns. His walk through the churchyard may perhaps be opportunely contrived; his encounter with Laertes at the grave of Ophelia is an event of the highest moment, and must on no account be omitted. Hereupon the King may deem it advisable to rid himself of Hamlet forthwith. The ceremony of his departure and his apparent reconciliation with Laertes are now celebrated with due festivity; knightly sports are held, and the contest between Hamlet and Laertes ensues. The piece cannot conclude without the four corpses; not one of those persons must survive. And when the populace has once more to elect a king, Hamlet with dying voice supports the choice of Horatio. . . . It has been perceived, and rightly too, that, whilst certain external circumstances are essential to this piece, they should be more simple in their nature than the great poet has represented them. That which takes place off the stage, that which the spectators do not actually see and must therefore imagine for themselves, serves, so to speak, for a background before which the acting figures move. The large, yet simple, view of the fleet and Norway will

enhance the effect of the play considerably. Leave that view out altogether and you have nothing but a mere family scene, whilst the grand idea of an entire royal house perishing, as is here the case, from the effects of internal vice and crime, would not be portrayed with that dignity which it deserves. If, on the other hand, the original background is allowed to remain varied, uncertain, and confused, then the characters themselves will lose in effect.

Why, it has been asked, should not the parts of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern be combined in one and the same person? Surely it would be an easy matter to effect this?

Heaven forfend! Such a curtailment would at once destroy both the sense and the effect. The spirit of these two characters cannot possibly be represented by one individual. It is in details of this nature that the greatness of Shakespeare is truly apparent. These soft approaches, this bowing and scraping, this cringing, this obsequiousness, this air of assumption, this vacuity, this knavishness, this inaptitude—how could all these different qualities be expressed by one man? There ought to be at least a dozen characters, if they could be found; for it is only in society that they are effectual—in fact, they constitute society, and Shakespeare showed his moderation and wisdom in letting but two such representatives appear. They are, moreover, both of them necessary, as contrasts to the one noble and excellent Horatio.

Shakespeare introduces the travelling players with a two-fold object. In the first place, the player who recites the

death of Priam with such depth of feeling makes a profound impression upon the *Prince* himself: he awakens the conscience of the hesitating youth; and this scene thus becomes the prelude to that one in which the short play exercises so powerful an effect upon the *King*. At the sight of the actor who can become so deeply affected by woes which are but fictitious and foreign to him, Hamlet feels himself rebuked, and is immediately prompted to test his step-father's conscience in a precisely similar manner. What a magnificent soliloquy is that which brings the second Act to a close:—

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I !
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing !
For Hecuba !
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her?" . . .

The more I study the part of Hamlet, the more plainly I perceive that I do not possess a single trait of feature or of form such as Shakespeare has intended for his hero. . . . In the first place, Hamlet is fair-haired. . . . How do I know that? As a Dane, a Northman, he is fair-haired by descent and has blue eyes. Was this thought present to the mind of Shakespeare? I will not say that it is actually expressed, but, in conjunction with other passages, it appears to me indubitable.

Hamlet finds fencing an irksome task; the perspiration runs off his face, and the Queen remarks:

“He’s fat, and scant of breath.”

Can you imagine him here as being otherwise than fair and well-conditioned? For dark-haired persons are rarely of this constitution in their youth. Then again, are not his inactivity and melancholy, his soft sorrow, and his perpetual vacillation, better suited to such a figure than to that of a slim and dark-haired youth? From the latter one would expect more resoluteness and activity.

In the first scene inside the castle the King and Queen should appear seated upon their thrones, surrounded by courtiers, whilst Hamlet stands inconspicuously amongst the latter. He must remain quiet; his “customary suit of solemn black” is quite sufficient to render him distinguishable. He must seem rather to avoid than to court observation. Not until the audience is terminated and the King addresses him as his son, should he advance, and the scene can then proceed in its course.

A great difficulty is presented by the two pictures to which Hamlet refers in the vehement scene with his mother. It seems to me that these pictures ought both to be displayed at full length at the back of the chamber, near the main entrance. The elder King, moreover, should hang in full armour, like the Ghost, at the side where the latter makes his appearance. I should like to see the figure so painted that the right hand is raised in a commanding attitude and the face turned slightly away with a look directed over the shoulder, so that it may entirely resemble

the Ghost at the very instant when the latter stalks away through the door. A fine effect will be obtained if, at that moment, Hamlet fixes his eyes upon the Ghost whilst the Queen is looking upon the picture. The stepfather may be represented in his royal robes, but he should not appear so richly attired as the other.

[*Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre.*]

STRAY THOUGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE.

. . . THE first page which I read in Shakespeare already served to win him my lifelong adherence. And when I had reached the end of the first play, I stood like one who, blind from birth, finds himself suddenly blest with sight by a beneficent Providence. In the clearest and most vivid manner I realised that my existence had been infinitely expanded. Everything now appeared new and strange to me, and the unwonted light dazzled and hurt my eyes. Little by little I came to see, and I can still feel distinctly, thanks to my spirit of gratitude, how much I had gained. I did not hesitate a single moment longer to renounce the so-called "regular" theatre. The unity of place seemed to me as close and restrictive as a dungeon; the unities of action and of time appeared like irksome bonds laid upon our imagination. I arose, and for the first time I felt that I had hands and feet. And now when I consider how much injustice I have suffered in that dungeon at the hands of those gentlemen who have pledged their adherence to the prescribed rules; when I think of the many free intellects which are still compelled to crouch within its walls—my heart would break, were it not that I have declared an open feud against them, and endeavoured day by day to dismantle and destroy the edifices which they have raised up. The Greek theatre, which the French adopted as their model, was constituted, both internally and externally, in such a manner that it was easier for a Marquis to imitate

Alcibiades than it would have been for Corneille to follow in the footsteps of Sophocles. O ye little Frenchmen, what would you with the armour of the Greeks? It is both too big and too heavy for you! And thus it is that all the French tragedies are parodies of themselves. There everything takes place with formal regularity; they, moreover, resemble each other like so many shoes, and at times become really tedious, especially in the fourth act. All this we unfortunately know from our experience of them, and I need therefore say no more on the subject.

The theatre of Shakespeare is a beautiful exhibition of rarities, in which the world's history is swayed to and fro before our eyes by the invisible threads of time. His plans are not plans in the common sense of the term; but all his plays revolve around that secret point which no philosopher has yet been able to see and to determine, and in which the peculiar quality of our *Ego*, the pretended freedom of the will, comes into conflict with the inevitable course of the whole. And here the whole tribe of Frenchmen, and those of the Germans who were infected with their manner of thinking, including even Wieland, have deserved little credit. Voltaire, who always made it his business to calumniate majesty in any and every shape, has also in this respect proved himself a true Thersites. Were I Ulysses, I would soon make his back writhe beneath my sceptre. Most of these gentlemen, too, are highly displeased with Shakespeare's characters. Now, there is nothing more natural, there is nothing more life-like, I say, than those persons whom Shakespeare has drawn for us. He rivalled Prometheus himself, and imitated the creations of the latter feature by feature; only he made them of a colossal size, and this is the reason why we fail to recognise

them as our fellow-men. Then, too, he infused life into them all with the breath of his own genius; it is he himself who speaks to us through the mouths of all; their kindred is clearly discernible. Does this age take it upon itself to judge of what is natural? How should we be able to do so, when all that we feel in ourselves and behold in others, from our earliest youth onwards, is stiff and starched and artificial?

As for me, I am often put to the blush by Shakespeare; for from time to time it happens that at a first glance I say, to myself: I should have done this or that differently; and then afterwards I discover that I am but a poor sinner, that through Shakespeare Nature herself gives utterance to her prophecies, and that my characters are, so to speak, mere soap-bubbles blown in a caprice of romanticism.

But although I have hardly begun my address, I must already bring it to a close. What great philosophers have said of the world may with equal truth be applied to Shakespeare. That which we call evil is simply the correlative of the good, and is as essential to the existence of the latter and of the whole as are the heat of the tropics and the frost of Lapland in order to constitute a temperate climate. He takes us through the world at large; but we, pampered and inexperienced mortals that we are, cry out at the sight of every strange grasshopper: Master, it is seeking to devour us!

Now, therefore, my friends, let us to work! With the trumpet's sound I would have you drive all the worthy intellects out of the elysium of so-called good taste, where, drowsy with sleep amid the oppressive twilight, they partly are and partly are not. Their hearts are filled with passion, whilst their bones are void of marrow; they are not tired

enough to seek repose, yet too lazy to be active; and, surrounded with myrtles and laurel-bushes, they fritter and yawn away their phantom lives.

[From an Address delivered by Goethe at Frankfort-on-the-Main in October 1771, on the occasion of a Shakespeare celebration, which he was mainly instrumental in organising.]

... I am very glad to find that I can indorse Tieck's¹ opinion when he shows himself to be a zealous upholder of the unity, indivisibility, and unassailability of Shakespeare's plays, and insists on their being performed upon the stage in their entirety and without revision or modification of any kind.

If ten years ago I entertained a contrary opinion² and attempted more than once to extract from the plays of Shakespeare only that which I considered really impressive, and to leave out all that seemed to impair the effect or divert the spectator's attention from the main issue, I for my part was quite right, inasmuch as I myself had a theatre to superintend. For many months I had put both the actors and myself to great trouble, which in the end only resulted in a performance that provided entertainment and surprise, it is true, but nothing more. Such a performance could not continue to form part of our *repertoire*, seeing

¹ Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), a celebrated German poet, novelist, and critic. Together with the two Schlegels he founded the so-called Romantic School. His writings on Shakespeare are of special importance.

² See p. 20.

that practically those conditions only admitted of being fulfilled once.

Lately, however, it has given me pleasure to learn that the experiment is being repeated in various places; for on the whole even failures are not altogether devoid of good results. And since mankind cannot desist from its aspirations, it is as well that these should tend towards some definite object and strive to re-establish in the present, by earnest and inoffensive means, a great and departed past. Now actors are under the same obligation as poets and readers, to look up to Shakespeare in order that, in their efforts to reach the unattainable, they may develop their own true and natural inner faculties.

Having, in my preceding observations, expressed my entire concurrence with the invaluable labours of my worthy co-worker, it merely remains for me to observe that I feel compelled to differ from him concerning some of his remarks, such, for example, as "that Lady Macbeth was a tender and affectionate creature and ought to be represented as such."¹ This and similar remarks I cannot regard as reflecting the author's sincere opinion, but as paradoxes which, in view of the eminence of the person from whom they emanate, cannot but exercise a pernicious influence. . . .

[*Ludwig Tieck's Dramaturgische Blätter.*]

Shakespeare's greatness has been recognised by the Germans more than by any other nation, nay, perhaps even more than by his own countrymen. Of the justice,

¹ See p. 51.

the credit, and the indulgence which we deny to each other among ourselves, he has received an ample tribute. Men of great attainments have occupied themselves with explaining his intellectual greatness to us in the clearest possible manner; and whatever has been said to his honour and in his favour, nay, even the excuses which have been offered for him, have at all times met with my hearty concurrence. I have already described elsewhere the influence which the extraordinary genius of Shakespeare exercised upon myself, and various contributions from my pen in reference to his works have been favourably received. I will therefore defer any other remarks which I may have to make upon this subject, until I am afforded an opportunity of laying before those of my friends who care to listen to me, a second series of observations upon works of such transcendent merit—which series, I must own, I felt strongly tempted to insert on the present occasion.

I will here merely explain somewhat more fully the manner in which I first became acquainted with Shakespeare. It was brought about in Leipzig, when I was still rather young, through Dodd's *Beauties of Shakespeare*. Whatever may be urged against collected extracts of this kind, by which authors are presented to us in fragments, they nevertheless often produce a beneficial effect. We do not always possess the necessary intellectual capacity to enable us to take in an entire work and to appreciate it at its proper value. Are we not in the habit of committing to memory those passages in a book which have a direct bearing upon ourselves? Young persons especially, who are deficient in real culture, are readily stirred by brilliant passages. As for myself, I still look back upon that epoch which was signalised by my first acquaintance with the

above-mentioned book as one of the finest in my life. Those splendid traits of originality, those weighty sayings, those striking descriptions, those touches of humour, each and all impressed me powerfully.

Then Wieland's translation appeared. This was quickly devoured, and friends and acquaintances were told of it and recommended to procure it. We Germans enjoyed the advantage that several of the more important works by foreign authors were first introduced into our midst by an easy and happy method. Shakespeare, translated into prose, at first by Wieland and subsequently by Eschenburg, formed a work of general comprehension and one which lay within the grasp of every reader, and thus it rapidly became popular and exercised a profound influence. I fully recognise the value of rhythm, which, like rhyme, is requisite in order to render poetry deserving of the name. But what produces a really potent and enduring effect, and truly tends to develop our minds, is that which remains of the poet when he is rendered into prose. Then the pure and perfect intrinsic worth is retained, which else a dazzling exterior had often made us fancy we could recognise when in reality it was not there, and which the same had served to obscure when it was actually present. At an early stage of one's development, therefore, I consider prose translations as being more advantageous than poetical ones: for it will be noticed that boys, to whom everything is sport, find delight in the mere sound of words and the cadence of syllables, and, from a sort of parodistic wantonness, would spoil the profound sense of the noblest work.

And here I would ask whether a prose translation of Homer were not next required. Yet such a version would have to be worthy of the level to which the literature of

Germany has to-day attained. I submit this suggestion, together with what I said before, to the consideration of our worthy pedagogues, whose extensive experience on this point will doubtless stand them in good stead.

In favour of my suggestion I would merely remind them of Luther's translation of the Bible. That worthy man rendered into our mother-tongue a work composed in the greatest diversity of styles, together with its poetic, historical, dignified and didactic tone, as admirably as though he had cast it in a mould. And by so doing he achieved more in the furtherance of religion than he would have done had he attempted to imitate all the various peculiarities of the original. Subsequent endeavours have been made to enhance the merit of the Book of Job, the Psalms, and other Canticles, by restoring to them their poetical form, but in vain. For the multitude, whom, after all, those writings are intended to influence, a plain rendering will always be the best. Those critical translations which seek to vie with the original really serve only to entertain the learned among themselves.

And thus it was that Shakespeare influenced our society in Strasburg. He was studied in translation and in the original, wholly and in parts, in extracts and quotations, with the result that, just as there are men who are, so to speak, scripture-proof, so we in due course became Shakespeare-proof. In our conversation we began to imitate the virtues and defects of his time with which he has made us familiar. His quibbles afforded us the greatest delight; we used to translate them, and our inborn wantonness even prompted us to try and rival him. Of the causes which brought this about, not the least important lay in the fact that we had, above all, evinced great enthusiasm in taking

him up. A joyful recognition of the fact that above me there lay something loftier, soon influenced my friends also, with the result that they one and all surrendered themselves to this feeling. We did not deny the possibility of our appreciating the merits of our poet more fully, of discerning and comprehending them with greater penetration. But this duty we reserved ourselves for some future time. All that we wanted at the moment was to derive as much pleasure as possible from those merits, to imitate them in our speech and conduct, and, in view of our great enjoyment, not to scrutinise too closely or pick holes in the works of the writer to whom we were indebted for that enjoyment. On the contrary, we derived the utmost advantage from holding him in unreserved esteem.

[*Wahrheit und Dichtung*, Bk. xi.]

Shakespeare is dangerous reading for budding talents. He compels them to reproduce him, and they imagine that they are producing themselves.

[*Sprüche in Prosa*.]

a book. The art of printing had, it is true, been invented over a century before his time. Nevertheless, a book was still regarded as something sacred, as may be seen from the style of binding which was then in vogue, and it was therefore a thing of delight and respect in the eyes of the great poet. But nowadays we pamphletise everything and rarely show any respect for either the binding or the contents.

[*Ibid.*]

• *Arden of Feversham*, Shakespeare's youthful work.¹ Here we have pure and absolute earnestness in absorbing and giving forth again, without a vestige of regard for the effect. The result is entirely dramatic, but altogether untheatrical.

[*Ibid.*]

Shakespeare's finest dramas display here and there a lack of facility. They are something more than they should be, and, for that very reason, indicate the great poet.

[*Ibid.*]

Shakespeare's *King Henry the Fourth*. If everything written in this vein that has been handed down to us were destroyed, poetry and rhetoric could yet be entirely restored out of that one play.

[*Ibid.*]

¹ A Tragedy, printed in 1592, and sometimes attributed to Shakespeare. It was doubtless written by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and the former may have revised some of the scenes.—TR.

If we compare the *Iliad* with *Troilus and Cressida*, we shall find that here, too, there is neither parody nor travesty, but merely a twofold idea of time. The Greek poem, with its elevated style, represents itself; it places before us nothing but that which is essential, and rejects all ornament even in its descriptions and comparisons. It is, moreover, founded upon the lofty mythological traditions of a hoary antiquity. The English masterpiece, on the other hand, may be regarded as a successful recast or transformation of that great work in a romantic-dramatic form.

And here we must not forget that the origin of this play, as also that of several others, can only be traced to narratives which were but semi-poetic, and which, being derived from some older source, had already been reduced to prose.

Yet even in this case the play remains entirely original, just as if the older work had never existed. For that same profound earnestness, that same power of insight, by which the ancient master is distinguished, were here once more rendered necessary in order to place before us similar individualities and characters with light and easy strokes, and to provide a later generation with fresh types of humanity corresponding to it.

[*Ueber die Parodie bei den Alten*, 1824.]

All declamation and mimesis depends upon recitation. And since, in reading aloud, the former alone has to be considered and practised, it stands to reason that readings must and will remain the school of the true and the natural, that is, if the persons who undertake the

teaching are properly imbued with a sense of the importance and dignity of their vocation. . . .

. . . Shakespeare and Calderon have afforded a brilliant opening for such readings; yet it must ever be considered whether their commanding and abnormal talents, which sometimes border upon the untrue, may not here prove injurious to German development.

[*Sprüche in Prosa.*]

- How much that is false Shakespeare and, more especially, Calderon have taught us. How these two great stars in the poetical firmament have led us astray, like will-o'-the-wisps, the writers of future ages may note historically.

[*Ibid.*]

Calderon, properly speaking, affords us by no means a correct view of nature. On the contrary, he is altogether theatrical; his plays savour of the footlights. Of that which we term *illusion*, and especially of that kind of illusion which excites our emotions, he does not exhibit the slightest trace. His plan is clearly unfolded and presented to the imagination; each scene follows of necessity upon the preceding one, with a regular ballet-like pace, which pleases by its artistic skill and points the way to the technique of our modern comic opera. The internal and principal themes are invariably the same: a conflict of duties and passions, accompanied by limitations arising from the contrast of characters and from particular circumstances.

The main action follows its course with true poetic

greatness. The intermediate scenes, which pass before us in neat array, are rhetorical, dialectic, and sophistical. All the elements of humanity are called into requisition, so that in the end we even meet with the fool, whose dulness of comprehension, whenever any illusion bids fair to excite our interest, immediately threatens to disturb it, if it has not already done so.

Now a little reflection will enable us to understand that human conditions, feelings, and events cannot be represented upon the stage in their original and natural form. They have first of all to be adjusted, clarified, and sublimated; and thus it is that we find them portrayed in the plays of Calderon.

Shakespeare, on the contrary, offers us the full, ripe grapes fresh from the vine; and we are thus enabled to enjoy them one by one, to press or tread them; we can taste or sip them in the shape of must or of duly fermented wine, whichever we please; each of these methods refreshes us.

Calderon, on the other hand, leaves nothing to the choice or wishes of the spectators; from him we receive distilled and highly rectified spirit of wine or alcohol, seasoned with various spices and tempered with dainties. We have to drink the potion such as it is, a pleasant and palatable stimulant, or else to forego it altogether.

. . . We may as well repeat on this occasion what we have already often declared in private—namely, that the greatest advantage in life which Shakespeare enjoyed may be considered the fact of his having been a Protestant by birth and education. Everywhere he appears as a human being, perfectly intimate with all that is human; he looks down from on high upon self-deception and superstition

and merely uses them as playthings. He compels preternatural beings to take part in his ventures; tragic apparitions and mischievous goblins are summoned forth for his purpose; and here everything is finally refined, nor does the poet ever find himself compelled to apotheosise the absurd—that most fatal of all the steps to which a man who is alive to the force of his own intellect can find himself reduced.

[*On Calderon's "Daughter of the Air."*]

A young friend of mine, Carl Ernst Schubarth, in his treatise *On the Merits of Goethe*, a work which I value in every sense and gratefully acknowledge, makes the following remark:—

"I am not of the opinion shared by most of those who admire the ancients (and to this number Goethe himself belongs)—namely, that no such favourable conditions for a high and perfect state of culture have ever been offered to the world as in the time of the Greeks."

Fortunately we can clear up this apparent disagreement by Schubarth's own words, for he goes on to say:—

"Of our own Goethe, however, be it remarked that I place him below Shakespeare; and I do so for the following reason. In Shakespeare I believe that I have found such an individual, of the highest ability, absolutely free from all self-consciousness, a man who everywhere brings into prominence, so naturally and with such unerring grasp, the true and the false points of humanity, whilst at the same time he avoids all argument, reflection, subtilising, and classification. In Goethe I recognise in every case the same aim at the close; but at first I have

always to wrestle with the contrary, to surmount it and to take careful heed for myself, lest I accept as the plain truth that which should be rejected as positive error."

Our friend has here hit the nail on the head. For in that very respect in which he finds me at a disadvantage as compared with Shakespeare, we moderns are at a disadvantage as compared with the ancients. But why confine ourselves to the ancients? Every talent, to whose development time and circumstances prove unfavourable, so that it is first of all compelled to force its way through manifold impediments and to free itself from a variety of errors, is placed at an infinite disadvantage, when compared with one of the same period, to which an opportunity is afforded of cultivating itself with facility and of executing without let or hindrance that which lies within its power. . . .

[*Philostrats Gemälde: Antik und Modern.*]

ENGLISH DRAMA IN PARIS.

1828.

WE good Germans, in which number I suppose I must include myself, have for the last fifty years found it impossible to escape the influence of Shakespeare's supreme genius. Following our usual sound method of procedure, we endeavour to penetrate into his very essence. We readily concede an ample tribute to the value and importance of the subjects and materials which he has employed in his poems. We endeavour, in our own way, to develop his method of treatment; we follow its course and bring the various characters to light. Nevertheless, despite all our efforts, we do not as yet seem to have attained our goal. Indeed, we have lately allowed ourselves to be misled into taking a decidedly retrograde step. We undertook to make out that Lady Macbeth was a tender and loving spouse.¹ Yet may it not be justly inferred from this circumstance (in which truth offends us, whilst, on the other hand, we welcome the appearance of error) that we have already gone round the entire circle?

Our western neighbours, on the contrary, with their vivid, practical sense, have here adopted an altogether different line of conduct. At the present time they are afforded the enjoyment of beholding in turn all the ablest English actors in the most famous and favourite plays; and this, too, upon

. ¹ See p. 46.

their own soil, whereby they are placed at the great advantage, as compared with those who visit the theatre in a foreign country, of retaining at hand their native standard of comparison. This latter, if they will but root out and cast aside their time-honoured prejudices, they can then apply with free intellect to that which is new to them, and thus will be granted them the surest opportunity of forming a critical judgment.

But to the real essence of the poet and his poetry, which, after all, no man will ever fathom, the French pay not the slightest heed. They look to the effect, upon which, indeed, everything depends, and whilst they are prepared to receive it with favour, they express and impart to one another what every spectator feels or ought to feel, even though he be not sufficiently conscious of it.

Hamlet,¹ we read, has at last appeared upon the French stage in its entire truth, and has been received with general acclamation. Even those who, owing to their want of acquaintance with the language, were prevented from appreciating a number of beautiful points due to the expression, confined their attention to the plot, and derived both enjoyment and emotion from this original drama.

Hamlet excites our interest the very moment he appears. No sooner has he been announced than we long for his presence. No sooner has he shown himself than we become united to him by a thousand ties. We almost dread letting him out of our sight. His is a wonderful soul, the strangeness of which is in itself sufficient to strike us. Who is there that does not yearn to ascertain what strange thoughts and unforeseen actions will spring therefrom? Who is there

¹ See *Le Globe*, tom. v., No. 71.

that does not long to explore its mysteries, to follow its various deviations? For there we are shown something which is not met with everywhere. There, within that heart so strange and, withal, so true, we may study humanity itself.

This soul is, moreover, filled with the greatest and justest of sorrows; it is harassed by horrible presentiments and conjectures; it is tender and sad, and at the same time magnanimous and endowed with activity. All this moves us and arouses our vivid sympathy. Hamlet's belief in the apparition of his father; the summons to revenge; the means which he devises to satisfy it; the part of the madman which he plays throughout with consummate art and subtlety, pain and hatred;—in all this there is nothing which could weary us. Without an effort we enter into all the circumstances through which he passes. His various encounters with Polonius, in which he displays so much that appears comical, whilst at heart he feels so much sorrow and bitterness; the scene of the play, in which he reveals the strangest of arts, in genuine subtleness and simulated insanity, of the most pronounced dignity and assumed absurdities; that strict and fearful investigation which he conducts with unwavering vigilance, whilst to outward appearances he is indulging in the childish tricks of a madman; the most flagrant violations of the rules of theatrical decorum;—all this might surely have afforded the French public ample ground for offence. And the public would have taken offence, had it not felt that behind this diversity of form, this variety of events, there lay the development of a character which was in the highest sense a dramatic one.



GOETHE ON BYRON.

BYRON'S "DON JUAN."

1820.

It may appear strange to our readers that, whereas on a former occasion we hesitated to insert a passage from the perhaps translatable *Conte di Carmagnola*, we have in the present instance boldly seized upon and dealt with that untranslatable work, *Don Juan*. We will hasten to point out the difference. Signor Manzoni is as yet but little known to us; hence one ought first to become acquainted with his merits in their entire fulness, as revealed in the original alone. Later on a translation by one of our younger friends will not be out of place. But into Lord Byron's talent we have been sufficiently initiated, and a translation will not enhance his reputation nor yet detract from it. The originals are in the hands of all persons of culture.

To ourselves, however, an attempt at such a translation will always be of some advantage; for, even if an imperfect reflection fails to give us a correct impression of the original, yet it will draw our attention to the surface itself, in which the work is reflected, and to the more or less noticeable defects in its nature.

Don Juan is a work that displays illimitable genius. It is misanthropic to a degree of the harshest cruelty, and yet humane withal, penetrating into the depths of sweetest affection; and since we already know and esteem the

author, nor would wish to see him otherwise than as he is, we thankfully enjoy that which with immoderate freedom, nay, with audacity, he ventures to place before us. The technical treatment of his verses, too, is quite in keeping with their strange, wild, unsparing contents. The poet is equally reckless both as regards his language and his fellow-creatures; and as we become more acquainted with him, we shall indeed find that English poetry possesses a cultured comic language in which we Germans are entirely wanting.

The German-comic element lies essentially in the sense rather than in the mode of treatment. Lichtenberg's fertility calls forth our admiration; a whole world of knowledge and its relations lay at his command, which he could shuffle together like a pack of cards and deal out wantonly according to the dictates of his fancy. Even in the case of Blumauer, whose construction of rhyme and verse bears the comic contents lightly along with it, it is really the sharp contrast between the old and the new, the noble and the commonplace, the sublime and the abject, that amuses us. If we look still further around us, we shall find that the German, in order to be droll or facetious, goes back a few centuries, and that it is only in doggerel rhymes that he succeeds in being really naïve and attractive.

In translating *Don Juan*, several useful hints may be borrowed from the English author. There is, however, one little device which we cannot copy from him; a comic effect which is frequently produced by the strange and dubious pronunciation of many words which look entirely different on paper. Any one who is thoroughly acquainted with the English language may judge in how far the poet has purposely kicked over the traces in this respect also.

The translation of the stanzas which we here present to our readers¹ was only occasioned accidentally, and we were induced to publish it so that it might serve, not as a model, but rather as an incentive. Our talented translators should all of them try their hand at some part or other of the work; assonances, impure rhymes, and what not, must all be allowed, and a certain laconic treatment, too, will be requisite in order to give the writer's bold and reckless style its proper value and weight. And only when something has already been achieved will it be possible to discuss the matter further.

Should we be met with the reproach that, in spreading the knowledge of such a work through Germany by means of translation, we are acting unwarrantably, inasmuch as we are endeavouring to familiarise a true, peaceful, and honest nation with the most immoral work which poetry has yet produced: we have to reply that, according to our intention, these attempts at translation should not exactly be for publication, but might very well serve as practice for persons of talent. The latter could then gradually improve and apply the knowledge thus acquired to the enjoyment and pleasure of their co-linguists. Upon examining the question closely, moreover, it is evident to us that the publication of such poems would no longer prove a serious detriment to the public morality, inasmuch as poets and authors in general would have to resort to strange measures in order to exert a more corruptive influence upon our morals than do the periodicals of the present day.

¹ The first five stanzas of the first Canto.—TR.

BYRON'S "MANFRED."

1820.

A WONDERFUL phenomenon, and one that closely touched me, was Byron's tragedy of *Manfred*. This singular poetic genius has taken my *Faust* to himself and extracted therefrom the strangest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour. Of such motives as correspond to his purpose he has made use after his own manner, and in such a way that no one of them remains the same; and for that very reason I cannot enough admire his genius. The whole is so completely transformed, that a series of highly interesting lectures might be delivered upon the alterations he has made, and their resemblance to, or dissimilarity from, the original: and there I cannot deny that the gloomy heat of an unbounded and exuberant despair becomes in the end oppressive to us. Yet the dissatisfaction which we feel is ever intermingled with admiration and esteem.

In this tragedy in particular we find the quintessence of the feelings and passions that belong to the most astonishing talent born to be its own tormentor. The character of Lord Byron's life and poetry hardly allows of a just and equitable appreciation. He has often enough confessed what it is that torments him. He has repeatedly portrayed it; and yet scarcely any one feels compassion for this intolerable suffering, over which he is ever ruminating, and with which he is ever engaged in laborious strife.

There are, properly speaking, two females whose phan-

toms haunt him unceasingly, and who, in this piece also, play important parts—the one under the name of Astarte; the other without form and actual presence, and merely a voice.

Of the horrible adventure which took place with the former the following is related. When a young, daring, and exceedingly attractive man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovers the amour, and murders his wife; but the same night the murderer himself is also found lying dead in the street, and there is no one to whom any suspicion can be attached. Lord Byron leaves Florence, and is haunted by these phantoms for the rest of his life.¹

This romantic incident derives a strong tinge of probability from innumerable allusions to it in his poems; as, for instance, when turning his sad contemplations inwards, he applies to himself the hapless history of the King of Sparta. It is as follows:—Pausanias, a Lacedæmonian general, acquires glory by the important victory at Platæa, but afterwards forfeits the love of the Greeks through his arrogance, obstinacy, and harsh conduct, as well as the confidence of his fellow-citizens through his secret intrigues with the enemy. He draws upon himself the heavy guilt of innocent blood, which attends him to his ignominious end. For whilst commanding the fleet of the allied Greeks, in the Black Sea, he is inflamed with a violent passion for a

¹ This was not the case. See Byron's letter to Murray, dated 7th June 1820, in Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*. Moore himself, in speaking of the "exaggerated, or wholly false notions" and "numerous fictions" that prevailed concerning his hero, refers to the above-mentioned rumour as affording "an amusing instance of the disposition so prevalent throughout Europe, to picture Byron as a man of marvels and mysteries, as well in his life as his poetry." (*Op. cit.*, p. 340.)—TR.

Byzantine maiden. After a lengthy resistance, he at last obtains her from her parents ; and she is to be delivered up to him at night. In her modesty she desires the servants to put out the lamp ; this is done, and, while groping her way about the room in the dark, she overturns the lamp-stand. Pausanias is awakened from his sleep ; suspecting the presence of murderers, he seizes his sword and destroys his mistress. The horrid sight never leaves him. Her shade pursues him unceasingly, and he implores for aid in vain from the gods and the exorcising priests.

That poet must have a wounded heart who selects such a scene from antiquity, appropriates it to himself, and burdens his tragic image with it. These remarks will throw a clear light upon the following soliloquy, which is overladen with gloom and a weariness of life. We recommend it as a useful and significant exercise to all friends of declamation. Hamlet's soliloquy appears improved upon here. A large degree of artistic feeling is necessary in order to throw the intercalary lines into proper relief and at the same time to preserve the coherence of the whole in a clear and fluent manner. It will, moreover, be readily noticed that a certain vehemence, nay, even eccentricity, is required in the mode of expression, if the poet's intention is to be properly interpreted.

MANFRED, *alone.*

We are the fools of time and terror · days
Steal on us and steal from us ; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke—
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain.
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness—

In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill
Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science—I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be :
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing—if they answer not —
The buried Prophet answer'd to the Hag
Of Endor; and the Spartan monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny—he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd—though he call'd in aid
The Phœbian Jove, and in Phrygia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,
Or fix her term of vengeance—she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd.
If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful—
Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain—
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil—now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart.
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night approaches.¹

[Exit.

¹ *Manfred*, Act ii. Scene 2.

CAIN: A MYSTERY.

BY LORD BYRON.

1824.

AFTER having for a space of nearly twelve months heard the most wonderful accounts of the above-named work, I at last took it up myself, and the perusal of it awakened in me a degree of amazement and admiration—an effect which all that is good, beautiful, and great will exercise upon a purely receptive spirit. I eagerly discussed the merits of the work with my friends, and, at the same time, made up my mind to say something about it to the public. Yet the further one penetrates into the work of such an intellect, the more one realises how difficult it is to reproduce it within one's self, not to speak of the task of placing it before others. And I might perhaps have remained silent, as I have done in regard to many another excellent work, were it not that an impulse from without urged me once more to consider the matter.

A Frenchman, Fabre d'Olivet, translated the said piece into blank verse, and imagined that in a series of critical, philosophical notes he had confuted the author of it. This translation has not fallen into my hands; but the *Moniteur* of the 23rd October 1823 undertook a defence of the poet, and the writer in that periodical, whilst expressing opinions which were entirely in accordance with our own in regard to various scenes and passages, once more furnished us with

food for serious reflection, as is usually the case when, amid many indifferent and confused voices, we at last discover one that appeals to us, whereupon we show ourselves ready to respond accordingly. Hear what the poet's advocate himself has to say concerning the piece:—

“That scene, which rises in effect until it reaches a climax in the curse which Eve pronounces upon Cain, bears testimony, in our opinion, to the power and profundity of Byron's ideas. In Cain he lets us recognise the worthy son of such a mother.”

The translator here inquires from what source the poet could have taken his principal character. Lord Byron would have replied: From nature and the study of nature, wherein Corneille found his Cleopatra, the ancients their Medea, and whence history has drawn for us so many characters swayed by boundless passions.

“Those who have carefully observed the human heart and who realise to what an extent its manifold emotions may lead it astray,—especially in the case of women, who, in good and in evil alike, do not recognise any limit,—will certainly not reproach Lord Byron with having sinned against the truth or gone beyond it at random, notwithstanding the fact that he was dealing with a world which had but just come into existence and with the very first family of all. He has drawn for us a nature ruined and corrupt; Milton, on the other hand, has left us a picture of it in all its beauty and original purity, a picture that enraptures us by its freshness of colouring.

“At the moment when Eve utters that fearful curse, with which the poet is reproached, she is no longer the ideal example of perfection and innocence. From the tempter she had already received the venomous leaven through which those glorious qualities and disposition, originally-designed by the author of life for a far nobler purpose, were for ever degraded. That

pure, sweet, self-content had already been transformed into vanity; and a feeling of curiosity, prompted by the common foe of humanity, lured its victim to fatal disobedience, thus thwarting the intentions of the Creator and deforming the masterpiece of His creation.

"In her predilection for Abel, in the fury with which she curses his murderer, the attitude of Eve appears to be an entirely consistent one, if we bear in mind the change which had come over her. The weak and innocent Abel, in whom we behold merely a fallen Adam, must surely become all the dearer to his mother, since he recalls to her mind in a less painful manner the humiliating picture of her transgression. Cain, on the other hand, who has inherited a far larger share of her own pride, whilst preserving that strength which Adam had lost, arouses in her at once all the recollections and sensations of self-love. Fatally wounded in the matter of her maternal predilection, her grief no longer knows any bounds, despite the fact that the murderer is her own son. And it behoved so great a genius as Lord Byron to paint this fearful picture in all its truth; he had to treat it either thus or not at all."

In the same way we can take up this argument and without hesitation apply what has here been said of the particular, to the general: if Lord Byron wanted to write a Cain, he was bound to treat the subject in the manner in which he has treated it, or else not at all.

The work itself is by this time in the hands of many readers, both in the original and in translation. No further announcement or recommendation of it on our part is therefore necessary. There are, however, a few observations which we consider it our duty to add.

The poet, whose keen mental vision has enabled him to penetrate beyond all conception into the past as well as the present, and in consequence thereof, also into the future,

has conquered fresh regions for his boundless talents. But what he will there be able to effect, no human being can foretell. His mode of procedure, however, we are already in a position to indicate more or less.

He adheres to the letter of the biblical tradition; and by making the first human couple exchange its original purity and innocence for a state of guilt brought about under mysterious circumstances,—thus causing the punishment thereby incurred to descend upon all posterity,—he lays the immense burden of such an event upon the shoulders of Cain as the representative of a dejected humanity plunged into the depths of misery from no fault of its own. A special source of perplexity to this afflicted and heavily laden primal son is death, whereof he as yet has no conception; and however much he may yearn for the end of his present life of distress, it yet seems to him much more repugnant to exchange the same for an entirely unknown state. From this we can already gather that the whole weight of a doctrinal theology, interpretative and mediatory, for ever striving with itself, as we still see it to-day, was laid upon the shoulders of the first hapless son of man.

By these afflictions, so common to human nature, his soul is swayed to and fro; nor are the resigned tenderness of his father and his brother and the gentle and cheering sympathy of his sister-bride able to allay them. Nay more, in order to neigten them to the point of intolerance, Satan arrives upon the scene: a craftily deceiving spirit, who first of all disturbs his moral composure, and then, carrying him in wondrous manner through the universe, causes him to behold an unduly magnified and exalted past, an insignificant and transitory present, and a future full of foreboding and devoid of consolation.

And so he returns to his own, more perturbed, though not more depraved, than before. He finds everything in his family life just as he had left it. Then the importunity of Abel, who wants to urge him to the sacrifice, becomes intolerable to him. We will merely add that the scene in which Abel meets with his death is admirably devised, and that the remainder of the work is likewise invaluable great. Now Abel is lying there! Now behold! we are face to face with that Death of which we had heard so much, and yet the human race knows as little of it as before!

We must not, however, forget that throughout the entire piece there runs a kind of presentiment of a Saviour, and that here, as elsewhere, the poet has succeeded in coming nigh to our methods of interpretation and doctrine.

Of the scene with the parents, in which Eve at last curses the speechless Cain,—which our western neighbour extols in such glowing terms,—no more remains to be said; we have only to approach the end with admiration and respect.

In conclusion, I may mention that a clever lady, who agrees with us in our appreciation of Byron, has remarked that everything that could be named religious and moral in the world is summed up in the last three words of the piece.

MY PERSONAL INTERCOURSE WITH LORD BYRON.

1824.

THE German poet, always anxious down to the latest period of his long life to clearly recognise and acknowledge the merits of his literary predecessors and contemporaries,—for this course he has at all times regarded as the surest means of cultivating his own powers,—could not but be attracted by the commanding talent of the English peer almost from the earliest appearance of the latter. And once attracted, he has uninterruptedly followed the progress of that writer's mind throughout the works which he unceasingly produced.

It was readily perceived by him that the popular recognition of the poet's merits grew and kept pace with the increasing number and power of his productions, which followed each other in rapid succession. And the joyful interest taken in the same by others would have been perfect, had not that poetic genius, by his fast and passionate mode of living and his inner discontent, to a certain degree arrested and stunted a productivity which was as lofty and spirited as it was boundless, and in this way diminished for his friends the attractive pleasure which his lofty nature afforded them.

His German admirer, however, was not led astray by this, but followed attentively the life of the Englishman as well

as his poetry, both of which were so remarkable. He noted all their eccentricity, which latter, indeed, could not but strike him the more, since the preceding centuries failed to afford any similar example, and the elements required in order to calculate so eccentric an orbit were entirely wanting.

Meanwhile the endeavours on the part of the German had not escaped the notice of the Englishman, who, besides affording unequivocal proofs thereof in his poems, also gave expression to his feelings by sending friendly greetings to him at intervals by means of various travellers.

Thereupon came a surprise—likewise forwarded through the mediation of another person—in the form of the original Dedication of the tragedy of *Sardanapalus*, couched in the most laudatory terms and accompanied by a kind inquiry as to whether the same might be prefixed to the play in question.

The German poet, who, at his advanced age, was well aware of his own powers and of their effects, could not but regard with gratitude and modesty the contents of that Dedication as the genuine expression of a great and inexhaustible intellect imbued with lofty thoughts and creating its own objects. Nor was he dissatisfied when, after some little delay, *Sardanapalus* at length appeared in print without the Dedication, since he was already in possession of a most valuable souvenir in the shape of a lithographed *fac-simile* of it.

The noble lord did not, however, abandon his project of affording his German contemporary and brother-poet a substantial mark of his esteem; a precious evidence of which was placed in front of the tragedy of *Werner*.

In view of these circumstances, then, it will be readily

believed that when so unhopèd-for an honour was conferred upon the aged German poet—an honour seldom experienced in life, and that too from one himself so highly distinguished—he was by no means reluctant to express the high esteem and sympathising sentiments with which his unsurpassed contemporary had inspired him. But the task was difficult, and was found the more so, the more it was contemplated: for what can be said of one whose unfathomable qualities are not to be reached by words?

In the early part of 1823, however, a young gentleman, Mr. Sterling by name, of pleasing person and excellent character, came to Weimar on a journey from Genoa and delivered, as a letter of introduction, a sheet containing a few lines by the great Englishman. And when, shortly afterwards, a rumour was circulated to the effect that the noble peer was about to direct his lofty mind and manifold powers to deeds of sublime daring beyond the sea, there appeared to be no time left for further delay, and the following lines were hurriedly written:—

“The friendly words come, one by one, to greet us
From the far South, and happy hours provide.
To rise and seek the noblest they entreat us;
'Tis not the spirit, but the foot that's tied.

Yet from afar what means have I of sending
Kind words to one who my close friendship knows;
To one who, with his inmost self contending,
Hath long since learnt to bear the deepest woes?

'Tis well if he ignore himself no longer,
And learn that he, too, thrice-blest yet may be,
If, by the Muses' aid at last grown stronger,
He knows himself as he was known to me.”

The verses arrived at Genoa, but failed to reach the excellent friend to whom they were addressed. He had already set sail, and to a distance, as it appeared, inaccessible. Driven back, however, by storms, he landed at Leghorn, where this cordial greeting reached him just as he was about to embark on the 24th July 1823. He had barely time to answer by a well-filled page which the possessor has preserved among his most precious papers as the worthiest evidence of a valuable connection.

Delightful and touching as was such a document, and justifying the most promising hopes, it has now acquired the greatest, though most painful, value from the untimely death of the lofty writer, which adds a peculiar edge to the grief felt generally throughout the whole moral and poetical world at his loss: for we were warranted in hoping that, when his great endeavours should have been fulfilled, we might personally greet in him the pre-eminent intellect, the happily acquired friend, and the most humane of conquerors.

At present we can only console ourselves with the conviction that his country will at last recover from that violence of invective and reproach which has so long been raised against him, and will learn to understand that the dross and lees of the age and the individual, from which even the best among us has to extricate himself, are but momentary, transient, and perishable, while the astonishing glory, to which he, in the present and through all future ages, has elevated his country, will be as boundless in its splendour as it is incalculable in its consequences. Indeed, the nation which can boast of so many great names will class him among the foremost of those through whom she has acquired such glory.

POETRY AND THE FINE ARTS.



ON THE TRUTH AND PROBABILITY OF WORKS OF ART.

A DIALOGUE.

1798.

ADJOINING the stage of a certain German theatre there was recently erected an oval and, in some degree, amphitheatral structure, resembling a portion of the house itself, in the boxes of which a number of spectators were depicted as though participating in that which went on beneath them. Several of the actual spectators in the stalls and boxes were dissatisfied with this, and resented what they regarded as an attempt to impose upon them something which ran counter to, and offended, their sense of truth and probability. This circumstance gave rise to a conversation, the substance of which I now proceed to relate:—

The Artist's Advocate: Let us see if we cannot find some way of settling this difference.

The Spectator: I do not understand how you could venture to justify such an imposition.

Advocate: When you visit the theatre, you do not expect everything that you may see there to be true and real, do you?

Spectator: No; but at all events I demand that everything should at least seem true and real to me.

Advocate: Pardon me if I contradict your own view and maintain that you demand nothing of the kind.

Spectator: It would indeed surprise me if what you say were true! If I do not demand this, why should the scenic artist give himself the trouble of drawing every line strictly according to the rules of perspective, and of painting every object with the exact proportion of light and shade? Why should the question of costumes be studied and such large sums expended in order to adhere faithfully to the dress of any particular period and thus transport me to those times? Why does that actor receive the largest share of praise, who gives the truest expression to his feelings, who approaches most nearly to truth in his speech, attitude, and gesture, who deceives me into believing that I behold, not an imitation, but the thing itself?

Advocate: You express yourself very well. But it is more difficult than you perhaps imagine, to analyse clearly one's own feelings in such a case. What will you say if I rejoin that all theatrical representations nowise appear true to you, but, on the contrary, bear merely a resemblance to the truth?

Spectator: I shall maintain that you are advancing a subtilty which is nothing but a mere play upon words.

Advocate: And I must reply that, in talking of the effects of the mind, no words are too precise, too subtile, and that such plays upon words even go to prove an exigency of the mind. Since we are not able to give direct expression to that which goes on within us, the mind tries to operate by means of contraries, to answer the question from two sides, and thus, as it were, arrive at a mean solution.

Spectator: Very good. But now may I ask you to explain yourself more fully, and, if possible, by means of examples?

Advocate: It will be easy for me to cite examples in support of my contention. When you are at the opera, for

instance, do you not experience a sense of vivid and complete enjoyment?

Spectator: One of the most perfect pleasures with which I am acquainted; that is, provided everything is in proper harmony.

Advocate: But if the good folk on the stage meet and salute each other in singing; if they announce the messages which they receive, and divulge to us their love, their hatred, and all their other passions, and fight and expire, all the while singing to us: how can you maintain that the whole representation, or even a portion of it, appears true—nay, I may say, bears even a semblance of truth?

Spectator: Indeed, when I consider it, I cannot venture upon such an assertion. In a performance of that kind nothing would really appear true to me.

Advocate: And yet you would derive full enjoyment and satisfaction from it.

Spectator: Undoubtedly. And now that I come to think of it, I recollect that an attempt was once made to bring the opera into ridicule on account of its gross improbability. Notwithstanding that fact, however, I have at all times derived the greatest pleasure from opera; and the richer and more perfect the performance, the more I enjoy it.

Advocate: And do you not experience a perfect illusion also in opera?

Spectator: A perfect illusion?—I should hardly use that term. And yet, yes—and yet, no——

Advocate: Well, now you are involved in an absolute contradiction which seems to me to be much worse than a play upon words.

Spectator: Wait a moment, and we shall discover some way out of the difficulty.

Advocate: As soon as we do so, we shall find that we are agreed. Will you allow me to put a few questions to you concerning the point at issue?

Spectator: Nay, it is your duty, since your questions have brought me to this confusion, by further questioning to enable me to extricate myself again.

Advocate: Am I to take it, then, that you would rather not apply the name of illusion to that state of feeling into which an opera transports you?

Spectator: Quite so; and yet it is a kind of illusion, or at any rate something very akin to it.

Advocate: At such times you almost become oblivious of yourself, do you not?

Spectator: Not almost, but entirely—that is, if the performance is wholly or in part a good one.

Advocate: And you consequently derive much enjoyment from it?

Spectator: I have done so more than once.

Advocate: Now, can you tell me the circumstances under which that has occurred?

Spectator: The occasions are so many that it would be a difficult matter for me to enumerate them.

Advocate: And yet you have already said it; you enjoyed yourself most of all, surely, when everything was in complete harmony.

Spectator: Precisely.

Advocate: And was such a perfect performance in harmony with itself or with some other product of Nature?

Spectator: With itself, beyond all doubt.

Advocate: Yet the consonance was surely a work of art?

Spectator: Certainly.

Advocate: Although we were just now denying to opera

a kind of truth, when we maintained that it by no means represents in a probable manner that which it imitates, must we not allow it a certain inner truth arising from the consequence of a work of art?

Spectator: If the opera is a good one, it certainly constitutes in itself a little world, where everything proceeds in accordance with certain laws; a world which requires to be judged by its own laws and experienced according to its own properties.

Advocate: Ought it not to follow, then, that the artistically true and the naturally true are entirely distinct from each other, and that it is neither advisable nor right for the artist to aim at making his work appear exactly like a work of nature?

Spectator: And yet it so often seems to us like a work of nature.

Advocate: I cannot deny it. But may I, on the other hand, be allowed to speak candidly and without reserve?

Spectator: Why not? We are not here to-day for the purpose of fishing for compliments.

Advocate: Then I will venture to state my case as follows. It is only to the entirely uncultured spectator that a work of art can appear as a work of nature. To the artist such a person is both welcome and useful, although he stands upon the lowest level. Unfortunately, however, he will remain satisfied only so long as the artist descends to his level; he will never rise with the genuine artist, when the time arrives for the latter to begin the flight to which genius impels him and render the scope of his work complete and perfect.

Spectator: Your remarks seem strange, yet they merit attention.

Advocate: You would not consider them worthy of attention, were it not that you have yourself already risen to a higher level.

Spectator: Let me now make an attempt myself to recapitulate the points which we have discussed, and, to continue further, let me take the place of the interrogator.

Advocate: By all means.

Spectator: To the uncultured alone, then, you say a work of art appears as a work of nature?

Advocate: Precisely. Think of the birds that flew after the cherries painted by the great master.

Spectator: Well, but does not that incident prove that the fruit was excellently depicted?

Advocate: Not at all! On the contrary, to me it merely proves that those lovers of art were genuine sparrows.

Spectator: Yet even then, I cannot help concluding that such a painting must be an admirable one.

Advocate: Would you allow me to relate a short story?

Spectator: By all means. I would rather listen to tales, as a rule, than to dry reasoning.

Advocate: Very well. A great naturalist once possessed, amongst his other domestic pets, a monkey which he one morning suddenly missed. After a long search he discovered the animal in his library, where it was sitting upon the ground, with the plates of an unbound work on Natural History scattered around it. Astonished at such studious zeal on the part of this domestic creature, the gentleman drew near and found, much to his annoyance, that the artful monkey had picked out and consumed all the beetles which it had found depicted on the various plates.

Spectator: The tale is not bad.

Advocate: And to the point, I hope. You surely will not

place these coloured plates on a level with the painting of a great artist?

Spectator: Hardly.

Advocate: Yet you would class the monkey among the uncultured lovers of art?

Spectator: Yes, and among the greedy ones as well. Your remarks suggest a strange idea to my mind. Does the uncultured lover of art perhaps demand for that very reason that a work should be natural, so that he too may be enabled to enjoy it in a natural, yet often crude and vulgar, way?

Advocate: That is precisely my opinion.

Spectator: And you therefore maintain that the artist who works towards this effect degrades himself?

Advocate: I am firmly convinced of it.

Spectator: There still remains one point which is not yet quite clear to me. You just now did me the honour, as you have already done previously, of including me among, at any rate, the semi-cultured lovers of art.

Advocate: Among those lovers of art who are in a fair way to become connoisseurs.

Spectator: Well, then, tell me: why does a perfect work of art appear to me also as a work of nature?

Advocate: Because it harmonises with your better nature, and is overnatural but not preternatural. A perfect work of art is a work of the human intellect, and in this sense also a work of nature; but inasmuch as the scattered objects are collected into one, and even the commonest are copied and invested with importance and dignity, it is above nature. It requires an intellect which is harmoniously formed and developed in order to comprehend it; and such an intellect, again, finds that which is in itself excellent and perfect to be conformable to its nature. Of all this the ordinary

amateur has no conception. He treats a work of art like any object which he may encounter in the market. But the true lover of art discerns not only the truth of that which is imitated, but likewise the advantages of that which is selected, the skill displayed in grouping the various objects, the supermundane portion of the miniature world of art. He feels that he must raise himself to the level of the artist in order to enjoy the work; he feels that he must pull himself together amid the scattered distractions of life, linger near the work of art, look at it repeatedly, and thus impart to himself a higher existence.

Spectator : Well spoken, my friend. I think I have experienced similar feelings at the sight of paintings, in the theatre, and in other forms of poesy, and have more or less anticipated the demands to which you have alluded. In future I will pay more heed to myself and to the works of art. But now that I come to think of it, we have strayed far away from the original theme of our conversation. You wished to convince me that I ought to find the painted figures of spectators at our opera admissible; and, although I have so far been able to agree with you, yet I fail to see how you can also defend this license, or what line of argument you would take up to justify your imposing those painted spectators upon me.

Advocate : Fortunately the opera is to be repeated to-day. You will of course not fail to be present ?

Spectator : I shall certainly be there.

Advocate : And the painted figures . . . ?

Spectator : . . . Will not keep me away, as I consider myself at any rate superior to a sparrow.

Advocate : In any case, I trust that a mutual interest may bring us together again before long.

ON THE LAOCOON.

1797.

A REALLY great work of art is like a work of nature, in that it remains ever infinite to our comprehension: we cannot template it, we are sensible of it, it influences us; yet we are unable to recognise its full meaning, still less can its true essence, its entire merit, be expressed in words.

The remarks which we now are about to offer concerning the Laocoon are therefore nowise intended to exhaust this subject; they have been recorded, so to speak, apropos of that excellent work of art, rather than based directly upon it. And here I may perhaps be allowed to express a desire that the latter be quickly restored to view in such a manner that every lover of art may derive pleasure from it, and have an opportunity of expressing his own opinions concerning it.

In order to speak of an exquisite work of art it is almost necessary to speak of the art as a whole: for such a work contains in itself the whole of art, and every one can in matters of this kind, so far as lies within his power, also develop the general from the particular case. Let us therefore preface our essay by some general observations.

All the highest works of art represent human nature. The plastic arts, to which we will for the present confine our attention, occupy themselves especially with the human form. Art comprises many stages, at any one of which

excellent artists may appear. A perfect work of art, however, comprehends and includes all those properties which elsewhere we only find singly distributed.

The highest works of art with which we are acquainted will be found to display:

Living, highly-organised natures: We expect to find, above all, a knowledge of the human body in its various parts, proportions, ends, both internal and external, and its forms and movements in general.

Characters: A knowledge of the diversity of those parts, in form and action. The different qualities are separated and represented one by one, thus giving rise to differences of character; and by these means a proper relation can be established between the various works of art, and also, in the case of compound works, a proper proportion maintained between their several parts. The object is:

At rest or in motion: A work, or its parts, may be represented either as self-existent, calm, and revealing its presence merely; or as in motion, embodying passion, effect, and expression.

Ideal: To attain this, the artist requires a large measure of profundity, thoroughness, and perseverance, to which, however, must be added a lofty mind, to enable him to survey the object in its whole compass, to discover the highest moment of representation, and thus to raise it out of a state of circumscribed reality into an ideal world, investing it with proportion, limit, reality, and dignity.

Charm: Now the object and the mode of representing it are governed by the sensuous laws of art. Such are the laws of order, comprehensibleness, symmetry, contrast, and so forth, whereby the work is rendered beautiful to the eye, that is to say, it is invested with charm.

Beauty: It is moreover subject to the law of intellectual beauty, which depends upon the proportion to which the person trained to represent or produce the beautiful knows how to subject everything, including the extremes.

Having in the first place mentioned the conditions which we demand from a great work of art, I will now proceed to the chief point and maintain that the group which we have chosen for our theme fulfils them all, nay, that they could all be deduced from that single group.

I will spare myself the superfluous task of proving that it reveals a knowledge of the human body and displays its characteristic traits, such as expression and passion. How loftily and ideally the subject has been conceived may be inferred from that which follows. That the work deserves to be entitled a work of beauty will be questioned by no one who is able to recognise the proportion in which the extremes of physical and mental suffering are there depicted.

On the other hand, it will seem paradoxical to many if I maintain that this group is at the same time possessed of charm. I will therefore add a few words to make my meaning clear.

Every work of art must reveal itself as such, and this it can only do by means of that which we term sensuous beauty or charm. The ancients, far from sharing the false notion of the moderns, that a work of art ought in appearance to resemble some particular work of nature, characterised their works of art, and constituted them such, by adopting a chosen arrangement of the various parts. The effect of symmetry thus obtained enabled the eye more easily to gain an insight into the relation of those parts, and in this way a complex work was rendered compre-

hensible. And through the combined effects of symmetry and opposition slight divergences sufficed to give rise to the highest contrasts. The care displayed by the artists in ranging various masses opposite each other, and especially in placing the extremities of different bodies, in the case of groups, opposite one another in regular order, was the outcome of a deeply pondered and felicitous idea. Looked upon in this manner, every work of art, even though its significance be not yet fully grasped, will always appear an ornament to the eye, if merely the bare outlines are seen from a distance. Among the ancient vases we shall find hundreds of examples of grouping thus endowed with charm. And it might perhaps not be impossible to make a complete list, starting with the most placid of vase-groups and continuing step by step up to the most mobile of groups, the Laocoon, and embodying the finest examples of symmetrically artistic grouping pleasing to the eye. I therefore venture to repeat once more that the Laocoon group, in addition to all its other recognised merits, forms at the same time a model of symmetry and variety, of rest and motion, of contrasts and gradations, which together present themselves to the beholder, partly sensuously, partly intellectually, and, amid the deep pathos of the representation, excite a pleasurable sensation and temper the storm of the passions and suffering with grace and beauty.

It is of great importance that a work of art should be self-dependent, or, in other words, rounded off and complete in itself. A restful object reveals itself merely by its presence; it is therefore complete through and in itself. A Jupiter, with a thunderbolt upon his knees; a Juno reposing in majesty and feminine dignity; a Minerva sunk in reflection: these are objects which have, as it were, no reference

to anything external; they rest in and upon themselves, and are the foremost and favourite subjects of sculpture. But within the glorious circle of the mythological art-sphere, in which these single, self-dependent natures stand and rest, there are smaller circles where the single figures are conceived and wrought out in relation to others. In the case of the nine Muses with their leader Apollo, for example, each one is independently conceived and executed, but amid the whole varied chorus the individual becomes still more interesting. In works of passion and deep significance, again, art can proceed in the same manner: it either represents for us a circle of figures related to one another by motives of passion, as, for example, Niobe and her children pursued by Apollo and Diana; or it displays to us in one and the same work the movement together with its cause. We are here reminded of the graceful boy who is depicted in the act of extracting the thorn from his foot, of the Wrestlers, of two groups of Fauns and Nymphs exhibited in Dresden, and of that splendid and stirring group of the Laocoon.

The art of sculpture is justly held in such high esteem, because by its means representation can and must be carried to its highest pitch, because it strips the man of all that does not form an essential part of him. So, too, in the case of the last-mentioned group, Laocoon is merely a name; of all his priesthood, of all the national characteristics which proclaimed him a Trojan, of all his poetic and mythological attributes, the artists have divested him. He is nothing at all of that which the story has made him. We see a father with two sons in danger of falling victims to a pair of noxious reptiles. The latter are, moreover, no gaseous serpents, but merely natural ones, powerful enough

subdue a few men, but nowise, either in form or action, extraordinary, avenging, punitive beings. In conformity to their nature, they crawl up to their victims, coil themselves around them and try to choke them, and the one only bites after having been chafed. Were I called upon to explain this group, supposing that no other interpretation of the same were known to me, I should call it a tragic idyl. A father was sleeping beside his two sons; they were surrounded by the serpents; and now, having awoken, they are striving to release themselves from their living coils.

The moment selected for representation is of the highest importance in this work of art. If a work of plastic art is really to move before our eyes, a moment of transition must be chosen; shortly before that moment no part of the whole must have been in exactly the same position, shortly afterwards every part must be forced to abandon it. By such means the work will ever seem new and living to millions of spectators.

In order to fully grasp the intention of the Laocoon, one should stand before it, some distance off, with closed eyes; then, opening the eyes and closing them again immediately, one will behold the entire marble group in motion. This impression will be accompanied by a fear that, on reopening the eyes, the whole group will appear changed. As it now stands, I would call it an arrested view, a wave petrified at the very moment in which it is about to break upon the shore. The same effect may be observed if the group is seen at night by torchlight.

The varied condition of the three figures is depicted with consummate skill. The elder of the sons is entangled at the extremities only; the younger has several coils round him, his breast, especially, being tightly compressed; by the

movement of his right arm he is trying to relieve the pressure, whilst with his left he is gently pushing back the serpent's head, to ward it off lest it form another coil round his breast; the reptile is on the point of gliding away from under his hand, but does not seem inclined to bite yet; the father, on the other hand, wants to free himself at all hazards from the fatal coils, he presses the other serpent, and the latter, being roused, bites him in the hip.

The attitude of the father, both as regards his body as a whole and also in respect of its various parts, will, it seems to me, be best understood if we look upon the momentary smart at being wounded as the principal cause of the whole movement. The serpent has not already bitten him, but is actually biting him at that very moment, and it is, moreover, inflicting a wound in a soft part of his body above and slightly behind the hip. The posture of the restored head has never indicated the actual place of the bite correctly. Fortunately the remains of the two jaws at the back of the statue have been preserved; and it is to be hoped that in the unfortunate changes which the group is at present undergoing, these most important traces will not also get lost. The serpent inflicts a wound upon the wretched man in a part which is susceptible to the least touch, and where but the slightest irritation is sufficient to cause such a movement as we here see brought about by the wound. The body darts in the opposite direction, the abdomen is contracted, the shoulder is forced downwards, the breast thrust forward, and the head inclined towards the side affected. The feet, which are tied, and the arms, occupied in endeavouring to cope with the reptile, form the remainder of the preceding situation, of the action which has just taken place; and thus there arises a combined effect—of striving

and fleeing, of attacking and suffering, of putting forth effort and surrendering,—which it would perhaps be impossible to bring about under any other condition. We are lost in amazement at the wisdom of the artist. Let us try to place the bite in any other part of the body, and we shall find that the entire posture would have to be altered. Nor can it in any way be more skilfully conceived than is here the case. We can therefore establish the following principle: the artist has represented to us a sensuous effect, and he also shows us a sensuous cause. The position of the bite, I repeat, determines the actual motion of the limbs: the elusive movement of the lower part of the body, the contraction of the abdomen, the breast thrown forward, the downward shrink of the shoulder and the head, nay, all the facial traits are, in my opinion, determined by this sudden, painful, and unexpected irritation.

Far be it from me, however, to ignore the unity of human nature, to deny to the intellectual powers of this splendidly formed man their co-operative influence, or to mistake the striving and suffering of a great nature. Anxiety, fear, terror, and paternal affection seem to me also to be pulsating through those veins, mounting in that breast and furrowing that brow. I readily admit that together with the physical suffering, intellectual suffering, too, is here portrayed in its highest range. Only we must be careful not to transfer too vividly to the work itself the effect which that work produces upon us; and, above all, we must not see a death-struggle in a being that is striving, in a state of sound health and splendour, and scarcely even wounded. And here I trust I may be allowed to make a remark which has an important bearing upon the plastic arts: the highest expression of pathos which they are

capable of depicting rests upon the transition from one situation to another. Take, for example, a lively child engaged in running and skipping about, and delighting in all the energy and joy of life. Watch it as it unexpectedly receives a hard blow from a playfellow or meets with some other serious injury either physical or moral: the new sensation is imparted like an electric shock to all its limbs, and such a transition is in the highest sense pathetic; it forms a contrast of which, in the absence of experience, one cannot form a conception. Now here it is evident that the mental, as well as the physical being, contributes to the effect. And if, in such a transition, a clear trace of the condition which preceded it can still be retained, we shall have material for the finest subjects of plastic art. This is what happens in the case of the Laocoon, in which striving and suffering are combined and united into one single moment. In the same way Eurydice, for example, would form a very pathetic statue if depicted at the moment when, tripping gaily through the meadows and carrying the flowers which she has gathered, she is suddenly bitten in the heel by a snake upon which she had trodden. The flowers falling from her hand, the attitude of all her limbs, and the bended folds in the drapery, would all aid in expressing the twofold condition of the nymph joyously rambling on and of the painful check which she encounters.

Now when we have properly grasped the value of the principal figure in this sense, we shall be able to examine with greater freedom and security the relations, gradations, and contrasts existing between the various parts of the work as a whole.

The subject selected is one of the happiest that can be imagined. Here we behold human beings fighting with

dangerous reptiles, with creatures which are effective, not as masses or in combination, but as distributed forces, not threatening from one side only or calling forth a combined resistance, but enabled, owing to their expanded organisation, to cripple more or less three persons without injuring them. By means of this crippling, the intensity of the movement is modified and a certain air of calmness and unity imparted to the whole group. The effect of the serpents is manifested in a series of gradations; the one merely twists itself round its victim, the other is chafed and, striking at its opponent, wounds him.

The three persons have likewise been chosen with consummate skill. The principal one is a strong, well-built man, who is, however, already beyond the years of greatest energy and is less capable of resisting pain and suffering. Imagine in his stead a robust youth, and the group will have lost its whole value. His sufferings are shared by two boys who, even in proportion, are small in build as compared with him. Here again we have two natures susceptible to pain. The younger boy is struggling faintly; he is frightened but not injured. The father is striving powerfully yet ineffectually: nay more, his striving produces just the opposite effect: he rouses his foe and is wounded. The elder son is the most lightly encased: he feels neither pressure nor pain; he is startled at the wound inflicted upon his father and at the movement which the latter makes in consequence of it, and utters a cry, whilst endeavouring to extricate one of it from the coils of the serpent. In this last figure, therefore, we also have an observer, witness, and partaker of the action, and the work is complete.

I wish to call special attention to a point upon which I

have already touched in passing—viz., that each of the three figures displays a twofold action, and is thus variously occupied. The younger son is endeavouring to relieve himself from the pressure by raising his right arm, whilst with his left hand he is pressing back the head of the serpent. He is seeking to diminish the present danger and to stave off the greater one—the highest degree of activity which remains for him in his present cramped position. The father strives to extricate himself from the coils of the serpents, and his body at the same time swerves from the impending bite. The elder son is terrified at his father's movements and tries to free himself from one of the serpents which is lightly coiled around him.

We have already praised the climax of the moment depicted as forming a great merit in this work of art, and we must now devote some further remarks to it.

We assumed that ordinary serpents had coiled themselves round a father and his sons who were asleep. In this case the moment represented would reveal an action which is rising in effect. The first few moments, during which the serpents are coiling themselves around their sleeping victims, are full of foreboding; yet they are not of much importance for the purpose of art. It might perhaps be possible to represent an infant Hercules who is encoiled by serpents while he is sleeping, but whose appearance in repose shows us what we may expect from his awakening.

Now if we go a step further and imagine to ourselves the father who finds the serpents twisting themselves around him and his children, be the cause what it may, then we shall discover only one moment of the highest interest—viz., when, one of the persons having been rendered defenceless by the coils, a second is able to defend himself, it is

true, yet has already sustained an injury, whilst the third still has a hope of escape left to him. The younger son is in the first-named of these positions, the father in the second, and the elder son in the last-named. One might try in vain to find another effective situation or to successfully distribute the parts otherwise than they are here distributed.

It then, contemplating the action from its commencement, we admit that it has at the present moment reached its highest point, we shall at once perceive, if we think of the moments immediately following and also of the subsequent stages, that the whole group must be changed, and that no other moment can be found which shall equal this one in artistic value. The younger son must either be choked by the coils of the serpent, or, if in his absolutely helpless condition he should rouse its anger, he will likewise get bitten. Each of these situations is insufferable, for it forms a final stage which should not be depicted. As regards the father, he must either be still further bitten by the serpent in other parts of his body; whereby his whole attitude would become changed and the effect of the first bite would be lost to the spectator; or, if it were retained, it would become an object of disgust; or again, the serpent may turn aside and attack the elder son; the latter will thereupon be thrown back upon himself, the event will lose the sympathy of the spectators, the last semblance of hope will have vanished from the group; it will no longer be a tragic representation, but a barbarous one. The father, who is at present quite self-dependent in his greatness and his suffering, would have to turn towards his son and thus become a participating, secondary figure.

At the sufferings of self and others a person experiences

but three sensations: fear, dismay, and pity; the uneasy presentiment of an approaching calamity, the unexpected sight of present suffering, and the participation in continuous or past suffering. All the three are represented by this work of art, and that, too, in the most exquisite gradations.

Plastic art, which always works for the moment, will, whenever it selects a pathetic subject, seize upon one that awakens terror, whereas poetry, on the contrary, confines itself to such as excite fear and pity. In the Laocoon group, the father's suffering inspires terror, and it does so in the highest degree; in him the art of sculpture has achieved its utmost. But partly in order to traverse the circle of human sensations, partly in order to soften the violent impression of terror, it also awakens pity for the condition of the younger son and fear for the elder, who moreover has still a hope left him. Thus did the artists, by means of variety, impart an equal balance to this work; they softened or heightened one effect by the aid of others, and ended by giving us a work perfect as a whole and appealing equally to the intellect and to the senses.

Enough; we may boldly assert that this work of art exhausts its subject and fulfils in the happiest manner all the conditions of art. It teaches us that when the artist is able to master his sense of beauty and to infuse it into simple objects, the same will shine forth in its highest force and dignity if it manifests its strength in the production of manifold characters and knows how to moderate and restrain, in the imitations of art, the passionate outbursts of human nature.

We may on some future occasion give a detailed description of the statues which are known by the name of the

Family of Niobe, as also of the group of the Farnese Bull. These belong to the few pathetic representations which have come down to us from ancient sculpture.

The moderns have as a rule gone astray in their choice of such subjects. When Milo, with both hands caught in the fork of a tree, is attacked by a lion, art endeavours in vain to make a work of it which could excite pure sympathy. A twofold pain, fruitless exertion, a helpless condition, certain destruction: these things can only excite our aversion, if they do not leave us altogether cold.

And, finally, one word respecting the relation of this subject to poetry.

It is very unjust towards Virgil and the art of poetry, to think even for a moment of comparing the most complete work of sculpture with the episodic treatment of the same subject in the *Æneid*. Since the unfortunate and banished Æneas has to tell of the unpardonable act of folly committed by himself and his countrymen in bringing the famous horse into their town, the poet has to try and devise some excuse for the act. The whole narrative is based upon this circumstance, and the story of Laocoon here appears in the form of a rhetorical argument in which an exaggeration, if it be but to the purpose, may well be allowed. Thus we see huge serpents, with crests upon their heads, issuing forth from the sea; they rush upon the children of the priest who had defied the horse, coil themselves round them, bite them, cast their venom at them. At last they relax their hold and thereupon coil themselves around the breast and neck of the father, who is rushing up to aid his sons, and triumphantly tower high aloft with their heads, whilst the unfortunate man, struggling amid their coils as they twist and turn, is vainly calling for help. The people are terrified

and flee at the sight; no one dares any longer to be a patriot; and the listener, horrified at the adventurous and horrible story, will no longer hesitate to admit that the horse should be brought into the town.

Thus it will be seen that the story of Laocoon, in Virgil, is merely introduced as the means to a higher purpose. Whether the event in itself, however, forms a suitable subject for poetry, is another question.¹

¹ Those interested in this subject may be referred to the translation of Lessing's "Laocoon," which is to be found in "The Laocoon and other Prose Writings of Lessing," published in the Scott Library.

DRAMATIC FORM.

c. 1775.

It is well-nigh time that people ceased talking about the form of dramatic compositions, about their length and shortness, their unities, their beginning, middle, and end, and all the rest of it; and that we now began to go straightway to their contents, which hitherto, it seems, have been left to take care of themselves.

There is, however, one form which is as distinct from the other as the internal sense from the external; a form which is not tangible but requires to be felt. Our head must be able to overlook that which the head of another can grasp; our heart must be able to feel that which the heart of another can feel. The intermingling of the rules will not give rise to looseness; and, though the example should prove dangerous, yet it is at bottom better to make a confused piece than a cold one.

Indeed, if only more persons were alive to this inner form, which comprehends within itself all forms, we should not be disgusted by so many abortive productions of the intellect; writers would not think of expanding every tragic event into a drama and of slicing up every novel into a play. I wish that some clever individual would parody this two-fold nuisance by arranging, say, the *Æsopian* fable of the Wolf and the Lamb in the form of a tragedy in five acts.

Every form, even that which admits of the greatest amount of feeling, has in it something that is untrue. Yet the form is invariably the glass through which we collect the holy rays of extended nature and throw them upon the heart of humanity as their focus. But as for the glass—he to whom it is not given, will not succeed in obtaining it, do what he will. Like the mysterious stone of the alchemists, it is both husk and matter, both fire and cooling draught; it is so simple, so common, it lies before every door, and yet so wonderful a thing, that just those people who possess it can as a rule make no use thereof.

He who would work for the stage should, moreover, study the stage, the effects of scenography, of lights, of rouge and other colouring matter, of glazed linen and spangles. He should leave nature in her proper place, and take careful heed not to have recourse to anything but what may be performed by children with puppets upon boards and laths, together with sheets of cardboard and linen.

ON EPIC AND DRAMATIC POETRY.

1797.

THE Epic Poet and the Dramatic Poet are both subject to the general laws of poetry, and especially to the laws of unity and of progression. Furthermore, they deal with subjects that are similar, and they can avail themselves of motives of either kind. The great and essential difference between them, however, lies in the fact that, whereas the epic poet describes an action as being altogether past and completed, the dramatic poet represents it as actually occurring. The best way of deducing the laws in detail, according to which both have to act, from the nature of man, is to picture to ourselves a rhapsodist and a stage-player, both as poets, the former surrounded by a quiet and attentive circle of listeners, the latter by a crowd impatiently waiting to see and hear him. Nor would it be a difficult matter to explain what is of the greatest use to each of these respective forms of poetry; what subjects each one will preferably adopt; of what motives it will preferably avail itself. I say *preferably*; for, as I pointed out at the commencement, neither of them can lay exclusive claim to anything.

The subjects of epic poetry and of tragedy should be altogether human, full of significance and pathos. The characters will appear to the greatest advantage if they are represented as having attained a certain stage of develop-

ment, when self-activity or spontaneity makes them still appear dependent upon themselves alone, and when their influence makes itself felt, not morally, politically, or mechanically, but in a purely personal way. The legends from the heroic times of the Greeks were in this sense especially favourable to their poets.

The epic poem represents above all things circumscribed activity, tragedy, circumscribed suffering. The epic poem gives us man working outside of and beyond himself; battles, wanderings, enterprises of all kinds which demand a certain sensuous breadth. Tragedy gives us man thrown in upon himself, and the actions of genuine tragedy therefore stand in need of but little space.

Of motives I distinguish five different varieties—

1. *Progressive*, which further the action, and are for the most part employed in drama.

2. *Retrogressive*, which draw the action away from its goal; these are almost exclusively confined to epic poetry.

3. *Retardative*, which delay the course or lengthen the way; these are used in both kinds of poetry with the greatest advantage.

4. *Retrospective*, by means of which events that have happened previously to the epoch of the poem are introduced into it.

5. *Anticipatory*, which anticipate that which will happen after the epoch of the poem; the epic poet, as also the dramatic poet, uses both kinds in order to create a perfect poem.

The worlds which are to be represented to view are common to both. They are—

1. The physical; and firstly, that most nearly approaching the one to which the persons represented belong, and by

which they are surrounded. Here the dramatist as a rule confines himself strictly to one single point; the epic poet has more freedom of motion, and his range of locality is much greater. Secondly, there is the remoter world, in which I include the whole of nature. This one the epic poet, who, generally speaking, has recourse to the imagination, seeks to bring nearer to us by means of similes or comparisons, of which the dramatist avails himself with less frequency.

2. The moral world is equally common to both, and is most happily represented in all its physiological and pathological simplicity.

3. The world of phantasies, presentiments, apparitions, accidents, and fatalities. This lies open to both, it being of course understood that it must approximate to the world of sensuous perception. Hence there arises a special difficulty for the moderns, because, much as we may desire it, we cannot easily find a substitute for the miraculous creatures, the gods, soothsayers, and oracles of the ancients.

With regard to the treatment as a whole, we shall deem the rhapsodist who describes that which belongs altogether to the past, to be a man of wisdom surveying with a calm recollection the things which have happened. His description will tend so to compose his hearers that they find pleasure in listening to him for a long space of time. He will distribute the interest equally throughout, since he is not able to counterbalance any untidily vivid impression with the necessary rapidity. He will turn about and wander to and fro according to the impulse of his fancy; and wherever he goes, he will be closely followed, for he has to deal with the imagination alone, which fashions its

own pictures and which is to a certain degree indifferent as to what pictures it summons up. The rhapsodist should not himself appear in his poem as a kind of superior being. The best method for him would be to read from behind a screen, so that his hearers might turn aside their thoughts from all personality and imagine they heard the voice of the muses in general and nothing more.

With the stage-player, on the other hand, the position is exactly reversed. He comes before us as a distinct and determined individual. He wants us to interest ourselves exclusively in him and his immediate surroundings; he wants us to share his mental and bodily sufferings, to feel his perplexities, and to forget ourselves in following him. He too will, indeed, set to work in a gradual manner; but he can venture upon far more powerful effects, because in the case of sensuous presence even an unusually strong impression may be dispelled by means of a weaker one. The contemplative listener is in reason bound to remain in a state of constant sensuous exertion; he must not pause to meditate, but must follow in a state of passionate eagerness; his fancy is entirely put to silence; no claims may be made upon it, and even that which is narrated must be so placed before the eyes of the spectator as though it were actually taking place.

ON DIDACTIC POETRY.

1825.

IN dividing poetry into various kinds, such as lyric, epic, and dramatic, it is not right that didactic poetry should be included. This will appear evident to all who observe that the first-named three varieties are distinct from one another in respect of their form, whereas the last derives its name from its contents, and cannot consequently be classed under the same category.

All poetry should be instructive; but the instruction should be conveyed imperceptibly; it should fix the reader's attention upon those matters in which he is to be instructed, and the latter should then draw the lesson therefrom himself, just as in actual life.

Didactic, or pedantic, poetry is, and remains, an intermediate creation between poetry and rhetoric. It therefore approaches more nearly, now to the one, now to the other, and may possess greater or lesser poetic value. Yet, like descriptive poetry, or invective poetry, it always remains a distinct and secondary variety, and should, in a proper work on æsthetics, occupy a place, as mentioned, midway between the arts of poetry and rhetoric. The intrinsic value of didactic poetry, *i.e.*, of an instructive work of art, adorned with rhythmic euphonisms and ornaments of the imagination, and represented in a manner fraught with charm or energy, will not on that account be in the least diminished.

From the rhymed chronicles and the memorial verses of the older pedagogues down to the best writings that belong to that kind of poetry, let every work be welcome; only we must assign to it its proper place and besitting value.

Now the more careful and reasonable observer will at once be struck by the fact that didactic poetry is to be valued on account of its popularity. Even the most gifted of poets might consider it an honour to have treated in that manner even a single subject that is worth knowing. The English possess some very commendable works of this kind. They first of all ingratiate themselves with the public in jest or in earnest, as the case may be, and thereupon give utterance in explanatory notes to those matters which one has to know in order to understand the poem. Now the teacher whose business it is to impart instruction in æsthetics, ethics, and history, might here find a fine field for establishing order in this subject by seeking to arrange and explain clearly to his pupils the merits of the finest poems of the kind, not according to the usefulness of their contents, but according to the higher or lower degree of their poetic value.

Strictly speaking, this kind of poetry should be omitted altogether from discourses on æsthetics; but for the benefit of such as have already taken their course in poetry and rhetoric, it might perhaps be introduced as a special course, say in the form of public lectures. And here again, as elsewhere, the true understanding thereof would prove of the utmost advantage later on in actual practice; for many a one would thus discover how difficult a thing it is to weave together a work out of knowledge and imagination, to combine two conflicting elements harmoniously in one living whole.

How best to bring about this combination it would be

the teacher's duty to explain to his audience, who, thereby assured from making wrongly-directed efforts, could then essay, each for himself, to construct a similar work.

Of the multifarious means of effecting such a combination, good humour is assuredly the most useful, and might also be reckoned the least troublesome, were it not that pure humour is a quality so rarely to be found.

No more singular undertaking could well be imagined than that of forming the geognosy to a didactic poem, and, moreover, to one of an entirely imaginative trend. Yet this has been done by a member of the Geological Society of London, a body which seeks, in this way, to further studies that are indispensable to every traveller, and to disseminate them among the masses.

LITERARY SANSULOTTISM.

1795.

THOSE persons who make it a strict rule, in speaking or writing, to combine definite ideas with the words of which they avail themselves, will very seldom make use of the expressions a *classical* author, a *classical* work. When and where does a classical author appear in a nation? When, in the history of his nation, he meets with great events and their consequences, together making for a propitious and significant unity; when he discerns breadth in the opinions of his countrymen, depth in their feelings, and force and consistency in their actions; when he, himself penetrated by the national spirit, feels that his innate genius renders him capable of sympathising with the past as with the present; when he finds his nation placed upon a high level of culture, so that his own development is rendered easy for him; when he sees before him a large collection of materials in the shape of the perfect or imperfect efforts of his predecessors, and when so many external and internal circumstances coincide, that he has no need to pay heavily for his experience, and is enabled, in the best years of his life, to comprehend some great work, to undertake it and carry it out in the proper order, and to execute it with a single and lofty purpose.

Let these conditions, under which alone a classical

writer, especially a prose writer, is rendered possible, be placed beside those under which the greatest Germans of this century have had to work, and every one who can see clearly and judge with fairness will retain a respectful admiration for their successes and a becoming sympathy for their failures.

An important piece of writing is, like an important speech, merely a consequence of life. The writer and the man of action, alike, have nothing to do with the circumstances in which they are born and under which they work. Every one, including the greatest genius, derives harm from his age in some respects, just as in others he profits by it; and a truly great national writer can only be demanded from the nation at large.

Nor must it be regarded as a matter of reproach to the German nation that, whereas its geographical position tends to keep it closely united, its political situation divides it. Far be it from us to desire those revolutionary upheavals which might pave the way in Germany for classical works.

It will thus be seen that the most unjust censure is that which shifts the point of view. Look at our position, as it was in the past and is to-day; observe the individual circumstances under which German writers have developed themselves; and it will be easy to discover the standpoint from which they ought to be judged. Germany is absolutely devoid of any central point of social culture, where authors might associate with one another and develop themselves by following, each in his own special branch, one aim, one common purpose. Born in places far remote from each other, educated in all manner of ways, dependent as a rule upon themselves alone and upon the impressions of widely different surroundings; carried away

by a predilection in favour of this or that example of native or foreign literature; driven to all kinds of attempts, nay, even blunders, in their endeavour to test their own powers without proper guidance; brought to the conviction, gradually and only after much reflection, that they ought to adopt a certain course, and taught by practice what they actually can do; ever and anon confused and led astray by a large public devoid of taste and ready to swallow the bad with the same relish with which it has previously swallowed the good; then again deriving fresh encouragement from their acquaintance with the cultured class, scattered though it be throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom; and fortified by the endeavours and co-operation of their contemporaries,—in this way the German writers at length find themselves arrived at man's estate, when the cares of earning a livelihood and of supporting a family force them to look beyond themselves, and in despair they must often devote their energies to work for which they themselves do not care, merely in order to acquire the means wherewith to produce that with which alone their fully developed faculties would fain occupy themselves. Is there any German writer of note who does not recognise himself in this picture, and who will not acknowledge with modest regret the many times that he has sighed for the opportunity of subordinating at an earlier stage of his career the peculiarities of his original genius to a general national culture, which, alas! was nowhere to be found. For the development of the higher classes by other moral influences and foreign literature, despite the great advantage which we have derived therefrom, has nevertheless hindered the Germans, as Germans, from developing themselves at an earlier stage.

Consider for a moment the works of our German poets and prose writers of undoubted name! How religiously and with what an amount of care they have, throughout their career, followed every enlightened conviction! Thus, for example, it would not be going too far to maintain that an intelligent and zealous man of letters, by comparing all the various editions of our Wieland—a man of whom, notwithstanding the growls of all the Smellfungi, we have every reason to feel proud,—could trace the development of the entire doctrine of taste by merely noting the successive emendations of this writer, whose efforts were untiringly directed towards attaining a better state of things. Let every observant librarian take care to stock his shelves with such a collection—which to-day he is still able to do—and the coming generation will know how to make a grateful use of it.

We may perhaps venture at a later period to place before the public a history of the development of our best writers as displayed in their works. If they themselves would but inform us, little as we may expect them to make confessions, of those influences of moment which have contributed the most towards their development, adding at the same time what has proved the greatest obstacle to it, the good which they have done would prove still more extensive.

For the very thing to which careless censurers pay the least heed—namely, the fortunate advantage enjoyed nowadays by young men of talent, of being enabled to develop themselves at an earlier age and thereby attain more rapidly to a pure style worthy of their subject—to whom do they owe this, if it be not to their predecessors who, in the latter half of the present century, have wrought out their own development, each after his own manner, with incessant toil

and in the face of many a hindrance? This gave rise to a kind of invisible school; and the young man who enters it to-day finds himself in a circle far larger and lighter than that to which the earlier writer belonged, who had, so to speak, first of all to stray and stumble through it in the twilight so that he might afterwards help gradually and by mere chance, as it were, to enlarge it. The half-critic, who wants to lead us and illumine our path with his little lamp, arrives much too late; the day has already dawned, and we shall no more close the curtains.

Ill-humour is not wanting in good society, and he must have a large share of ill-humour who can deny the presence in Germany of writers of excellence at the very time when almost every one writes well. We have not far to seek in order to come across a clever novel, a successful story, or a clearly-written essay upon this or that subject. Our critical periodicals, journals, and summaries frequently bear evidence of a good, harmonious style. The Germans are extending their field of knowledge more and more and learning to survey the whole with a clearer vision. A philosophy is rendering them every day more familiar with their intellectual powers, despite the opposition of wavering opinions, and teaching them to apply those powers with greater success. The many examples of style, the previous works and efforts of many men, enable the youth at an earlier stage to represent, with a clearness and charm befitting the subject, that which he has absorbed from the world around him and brought to maturity within himself. And so every interested and reasonable German sees the writers of his nation occupying a fairly high level, and is convinced that the public likewise will refuse to be misled by any ill-humoured fault-finder. The latter ought to be excluded

from society in the same way as every one should be excluded whose destructive efforts cannot have any other effect but that of discouraging those who do the work, of alienating those who sympathise by inclining them to sluggishness, and of filling the onlookers with distrust and indifference.

SIMPLE IMITATION—NATURE, MANNER, STYLE.

1788.

It will not, I think, be superfluous to point out exactly what meaning we attach to these terms, which we shall often have occasion to employ. Although the same have long been adopted in writing and their meaning apparently defined in theoretical works, yet each individual as a rule makes use of them in a peculiar sense of his own and attaches more or less meaning to them, accordingly as with greater or lesser clearness he grasps the ideas which they are intended to convey.

SIMPLE IMITATION OF NATURE.

If an artist—assuming that he were endowed by nature with talent—had, at an early stage of his career, after practising his hand and eye but little upon models, applied himself to the objects of Nature; if he had copied her forms with fidelity and zeal and imitated her colours to the minutest shade; if conscientiously he had never forsaken her, but had commenced and finished in her presence every painting which he had undertaken to execute: such a one would ever prove an estimable artist, for he could not but become convinced to an incredible degree that his works must be true, forcible, and abounding in interest.

If the above conditions are carefully weighed, it will

easily be seen that a nature which is indeed capable, yet at the same time circumscribed, could in this manner treat objects which are pleasing but likewise circumscribed. Such objects must be easy of imitation and always accessible; they must be surveyed in comfort and imitated without trouble; the temperament that busies itself with such a task must be calm, introspective, and contented with a moderate degree of enjoyment.

This method of imitation would therefore be adopted and practised by persons of a calm, conscientious, and restricted mind, in depicting objects of still life. Its nature, moreover, is such as to admit of a high degree of perfection.

MANNER.

Yet such a mode of procedure will to many a man prove too fretful or insufficient. He perceives a number of objects which harmonise together, but which he can only introduce into a single picture by sacrificing individual details; in drawing, it irks him to have to spell out, as it were, the letters of nature. So he invents a manner of his own, forms a language for himself, so as to give a new expression, in his own way, to that which his soul has comprehended, or to invest with a peculiar and significant form objects which he has often repeated, without being face to face with Nature herself when he repeats them, or calling her directly and vividly to mind.

Hence there results a language in which the intellect of the person using it finds a direct expression. And just as opinions upon moral questions are formed and range themselves in a different manner in each separate individual who thinks for himself, so too will every artist of this kind look upon the world, comprehend it, and copy it, in a different

manner; he will grasp the phenomena of Nature with circumspection or lightness, he will reproduce them soundly or superficially, as the case may be.

We see that this kind of imitation is not employed with success in objects which contain many smaller objects subordinated to one large whole. These smaller ones must be sacrificed if the general effect of the whole object is to be preserved, as is the case, for example, with landscapes, where the whole aim would be missed if we lingered too anxiously over individual details instead of retaining the general impression of the whole.

STYLE.

Now if, by imitating nature, by endeavouring to invent a general language for itself, and by making an exact and profound study of the objects themselves, art at last reaches a stage in which it becomes more and ever more familiar with the properties of things and the qualities of which they consist; when it is able to survey the different series of forms and range the various characters beside one another: then style forms the highest point to which it can attain—that point at which it can venture to claim equality with the highest of human efforts.

As the simple imitation of an object demands a mere placid existence and pleasing presence; and as the manner manifests itself by seizing upon an object in a light and capable spirit: so the style depends upon the profoundest depths of the understanding, upon the essence of things in so far as it is given to us to recognise the same in visible and tangible forms.

The development of the above principles would take up

entire volumes, and much has been written about them in books: the pure conception, however, can only be studied in nature and in works of art. We will now add a few observations, and shall, whenever we come to treat of plastic art, have occasion to refer to these pages.

It will be readily understood that these three distinct methods of producing works of art are closely related to each other, and that any one method may easily run into the other.

The simple imitation of objects easy of comprehension—we will here take flowers and fruit as an example—can be brought to a high degree of perfection. It is natural that one who copies roses should soon learn to recognise and distinguish the fairest and freshest roses and to pick them out from among the thousands which the summer has to offer him. Here, then, the question of selection already presents itself, even though the artist may not have formed any general and definite conception of the beauty of the rose. He has to deal with comprehensible forms; everything depends upon the manifold design and the colouring of the surface. The downy peach, the soft-coated plum, the smooth apple, the bright-hued cherry, the dazzling rose, the many-tinted carnations, the variegated tulips,—all these he will keep before him at will in his quiet studio; he will behold them in the height of their bloom and ripeness; he will place them in the most suitable light; his eye will readily accustom itself to the harmony of bright colours; each year he will be in a position to obtain the same objects and renew the experiment, and by calmly contemplating and imitating those objects in their simple existence he will learn to recognise and seize upon their characteristics without any troublesome abstraction. And

thus there will arise the wondrous works of a Huysum, of a Rachel Ruysch,—artists who have, so to speak, worked their way over and beyond the limits of possibility. It is evident that such an artist must become all the greater and more powerful if, in addition to his talent, he also possesses a sound knowledge of botany; if he recognises the influence of the various parts of a plant, from the root upwards, upon its progress and growth, also their purpose and reciprocal effects; if he is able to understand and follow the successive development of the leaves, flowers, fruit, and newly-created germ. He will then not only display his taste by the choice which he makes amongst the various phenomena, but he will at the same time astound and edify us by giving us a correct representation of their different properties. In this sense he may be said to have created a style for himself, just as on the other hand it will be quite apparent that such a master, if he were not so precise, if he were intent upon giving slight expression to merely the most prominent and striking characteristics, would quickly degenerate into mannerism.

Simple imitation therefore works, so to speak, in the outer-court of style. The greater the care and fidelity with which it is practised, the more calmly the objects exposed to view are taken in, the more composedly they are imitated, the more the artist accustoms himself to think over them, that is, the more he learns to compare and connect those things which are similar, disconnect those which are dissimilar, and classify individual objects under general concepts: the more he will render himself worthy of setting foot within the very sanctuary itself.

If we now turn once again to manner, we find that it can be, in the highest and best sense of the term, a mean

between simple imitation and style. The more it approaches in its lighter moods to true imitation, the greater the eagerness with which it seeks, from the other side, to grasp and express in a palpable form the characteristic features of an object, the more it manages to combine both these conditions by means of a pure, vivid, and active individuality: the loftier, greater, and more deserving of respect will it become. If such an artist neglects to remain true to nature and to think of nature, he will drift further and further away from the true basis of art; his manner will become ever more void and insignificant, the further he is removed from simple imitation and from style.

We need hardly add that we are here using the word *manner* (Manier) in a lofty and respectful sense, and that therefore those artists whose works lie, in our opinion, within the sphere of manner, have no cause for complaint against us. All that we wish to impress upon our readers is that the term *style* should be regarded as the most honourable, so that we may still retain an expression wherewith to denote the highest stage to which art has ever attained or can ever attain. Merely to recognise this stage, of itself already constitutes a great boon; to discuss it with men of sense is a noble pleasure which we hope oftentimes to afford ourselves hereafter.

CLAIMS UPON THE MODERN SCULPTOR.

1817.

- THE question has lately been raised as to how the plastic artist, desirous of paying honour to a conqueror, could represent him as the victor and his foes as the vanquished, as an architectural embellishment, say, in a pediment, a frieze, or some other form of decoration, as was frequently done by the ancients. At the present day, when civilised and cultured nations engage in conflict with one another, the solution of this problem is rendered more difficult than it was in olden times, when men of higher qualities had to fight against rude, brutish, or savage creatures.

The Greeks, to whom we must ever look up as to our masters, in representing such scenes, invested them with a distinctive interest by establishing a contrast of forms. We see gods fighting against Titans, and the spectator quickly declares himself for the nobler of these forms. The same is the case when Hercules struggles with monsters, or Lapithæ engage in strife with Centaurs. Between the last-named the artist allows the scales of victory to sway to and fro, the victors and the vanquished exchange parts, and we ever incline to the hope that the doughty race of heroes will triumph in the end. A feeling almost entirely opposed to this is aroused at the sight of men wrestling with Amazons; the latter, although sturdy and bold, are never-

theless to be regarded as the weaker party, and a heroic race of women calls forth our pity, as soon as we behold it vanquished, wounded, or dead. A fine idea of this kind, and one which deserves to be highly valued for its extreme gracefulness, is that expressed by the contest between the Bacchantes and Fauns and the Tyrrhenians. The former, in their nature of pure creatures of the mountain and hillside, in their form half rams, half roes, attack the rapacious pirates with such force as to drive them into the water, when in their fall they have to thank the merciful powers above for being allowed, transformed into dolphins, to belong henceforth to their proper element. No finer or more graceful representation could probably be placed before the senses.

In a somewhat less successful manner does Roman art, in its triumphal columns, subordinate the vanquished and captive Daci in their many-folded garb to its own harnessed and otherwise well-armed warriors. So, too, did the later Polydorus and his contemporaries represent the divided civil parties of the Florentines as fighting against each other. Annibale Carracci, desirous of imparting a significant adornment to the corbels in the hall of Alexander Fava's palace at Bologna, selects sturdy male figures, contending with sphinxes or harpies, in such a way that the latter are always the oppressed,—an idea which cannot be said to be either happy or unhappy. From this contrast the painter derives great advantages from an artistic point of view, but the spectator, who after all recognises that the motive is nothing but mechanical, experiences throughout something unpleasant, for even a monster we would willingly see overcome, but not oppressed.

All this will explain the original difficulty of placing beside

one another, in characteristic distinction, first of all contending parties, and then victors and vanquished, in such a manner as to preserve an equipoise and not to disturb the interest in either side.

In modern times, a work of art appealing to us in this way is more rarely to be met with. The sight of armed Spaniards engaged in combat with naked Americans is insufferable; the contrast of overpowering force on the one hand and innocence on the other is far too vividly expressed, just as in the massacre of the children at Bethlehem. Christians conquering Turks form a better subject, especially if the Christian soldiery is portrayed in the costume of the seventeenth century. The contempt of the Mohammedans for all unbelievers, and their cruelty towards slaves of our race, justifies our hating them and putting them to death.

Christians contending with Christians, especially in later times, will not form a good picture. We have fine engravings representing scenes from the American war; yet these, if contemplated with pure feelings, will be found intolerable. Well-dressed, regular, powerfully-armed troops, engaged in warfare amid a collected mob, among which we can discern priests as leaders and children as standard-bearers, cannot delight our eyes, still less our inner sense, even though we may persuade ourselves that the weaker side will eventually prove victorious. If, moreover, we behold even half-naked savages taking part in the conflict, we must acknowledge that it is merely a piece of newspaper-intelligence which the artist has followed. A panorama of the terrible fall of Tippoo Sahib could have found favour with none but such as had themselves taken part in the plunder of his treasures.

If we carefully consider the state of things to-day, we shall find that the Christians are all related to each other by religious and moral ties, and are in reality brothers; and that it is not so much questions of sentiment and opinion as matters of trade and commerce that set us at variance with one another. The German landed proprietor welcomes the Englishman who enhances the value of wool, and for that very reason the southern manufacturer detests him.

Germans and Frenchmen, although politically and morally in eternal conflict, can no longer be pictorially displayed as fighting against each other; we have adopted too many of their external traits, nay, even to a large extent their military attire, so that no sharp distinction could be drawn between two nations dressed so much alike. And consequently,—to return to the point from which we started,—if the sculptor wished to exercise his rights and privileges by depriving his figures of all distinctive apparel and external decoration, every characteristic difference would vanish and both sides would present the same appearance: we should have fine-looking people murdering one another, and the fatal group of Eteocles and Polynices—to which the presence of the Furies can alone impart an air of significance—would have to be continually repeated.

Russians in opposition to foreigners offer a better advantage: they have retained from olden times their characteristic helmets and weapons, which can serve to distinguish them; the manifold races of this immeasurable empire, moreover, offer great varieties of costume, which a clever artist could turn to the best account.

It is for such artists that this suggestion is intended; its

object is to call their attention again and again to the fact that some subjects are favourable, whereas others are not so; the former have a natural lightness and always rise to the surface; the latter are only kept above water by the use of cumbersome and extraneous aids.

ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

1831.

I.

WHEN Painting, in the west and especially in Italy, leaving behind it its mummified Byzantine origin, turned once more to Nature, the efforts of men were directed, during their first great and earnest endeavours, towards the human form alone, in which divine subjects and such as resembled them were represented. A sort of sacred setting was often added to the pictures, nor was this at all out of place, since they were intended for the decoration of churches and chapels.

Now as, during the further progress of art, men came to contemplate and study free Nature, they deemed it fitting that their figures should be placed amid worthy or important surroundings. With this object they would select lofty points of view, and depict a stretch of bare rocks surmounted by many-turreted castles, dense forests, woods, and waterfalls. These environments in the course of time gained the upper hand more and more, with the result that the figures became proportionately smaller and more insignificant, until they at last shrank together into what we term *Staffage*. But the interest in these landscape-pictures, as previously in sacred ones, had to be maintained at all costs, and the artists therefore proceeded not only to fill them with such features as any particular spot had to offer, but tried moreover to crowd an entire world into them, so

that the spectator might have something to look at, whilst the lover of art might at the same time obtain proper value for his money. From the summits of lofty rocks, upon which wild goats or chamois were to be seen disporting themselves, streams of water descended in a series of cascades through ruins and thickets. These cascades were ultimately utilised for mills and foundries, whilst, further down, they washed over rustic shores, passed through large towns, bore along ships of no small size, and were at length merged in the ocean. That hunters and fishermen followed their pursuits and plied their craft amid these scenes, whilst a thousand other creatures of the earth were displayed in full activity, may readily be imagined. The air was not devoid of birds, stags and roe-deer were to be seen pasturing in woody glades, and it would be an endless task to recount all that could be observed there at a single glance. Yet in order that something might after all remain to remind one of the original purpose of the picture, a holy hermit would be depicted in some corner or other. Hieronymus with the lion, Magdalene with her garb of hair, were rarely wanting.

II.

Titian, who was, on the whole, possessed of a grand artistic taste, began, in so far as he occupied himself with landscape-painting, to study economy in dealing with the wealth which lay at his command. His pictures in this style have a peculiar character of their own. We see wooden houses towering upwards in strange fashion, mountain-ridges of moderate height, a manifold variety of hills, rippled lakes, never without important figures of human and animal life. We see him, too, quite heedlessly

placing his beautiful infants, nude, under the open sky, amid the grass.

III.

Breughel's¹ pictures display the most wonderful variety: here we likewise have lofty horizons, a wide expanse of scenery, and water running right down into the sea; but the outline of his mountain-ridges, though somewhat uneven, is nevertheless not so steep, and is especially remarkable for the comparative dearth of vegetation. Rocky ground everywhere forms the most prominent feature, yet the situation of his castles and towns is most varied and striking, nor would it be possible anywhere to mistake the earnest character of the sixteenth century.

Paul Brill:² a highly-endowed nature. In his works traces may still be discerned of the above-mentioned origin; but here everything has already assumed a more cheerful and pleasant air, and the various characteristics of the landscape have been made more distinct. It is no longer an entire world that we see, but detached, though important and far-reaching, details.

Of the excellent manner in which he understood, estimated, and availed himself of the circumstances of place, of the habitation and utilisation of earthly localities, the finest example is afforded by his *Twelve Months*, re-

¹ "The modern form of writing the name of the village is Breughel, or Breugel; hence the fact that the name of the painters is often so written. But the way they themselves write it, and consequently the *right* way, is Brueghel, or sometimes Bruegel." *German, Flemish, and Dutch Painting*, by H. J. Wilmot Buxton and Edward J. Poynter (Sampton Low), p. 103, note.—Tr.

² Or Pauwel Brill, the best of the Flemish landscape-painters, 1556-1626. *Op. cit.*, p. 108.—Tr.

presented in six plates. It is especially interesting to note how he has succeeded in grouping the different pairs and forming a perfect picture by blending one with another.

Mention must also be made of the hermitages of Martin de Vos, engraved by Johann and Raphael Sadeler. Here we behold the figures of the holy men and women duly proportioned to their wild surroundings; both are depicted with deep earnestness and thorough artistic taste.

IV.

The seventeenth century frees itself more and more from the obtrusive and fretful world: the figures of the Carracci demand a larger scope. A great and beautiful world is set forth in proportion to the figures, and perhaps even outweighs the latter in prominence by virtue of its highly interesting localities.

Domenichino, during his sojourn in Bologna, merges himself in the mountainous and lonely surroundings; his delicate sense of perception, his masterly treatment, and his exceedingly graceful portrayal of human forms, cannot be too highly valued.

Of Claude Lorrain, who now appears and gives himself up altogether to the free, distant, cheerful, rustic, fairy-like and architectural, we need only say that he has attained the farthest limit in freedom of artistic utterance. Every one is familiar with his works, and every one feels more or less that to him the mastery must be attributed.

V.

Then there also came into existence the so-called heroic landscape, which seemed to form the abode of a race possessed of few wants and lofty thoughts. The prevailing

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS
ON
LIFE, CHARACTER, ART AND LITERATURE.
(Sprüche in Prosa.)

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

EVERYTHING that is worth thinking has already been thought before; we must only try to think it again.

How can a man learn to know himself? Never by meditating, but by doing. Endeavour to do thy duty, and thou wilt at once know what in thee lies.

But what is thy duty? The claims of the day.

The world of reason must be regarded as a great and immortal being who unceasingly brings about that which is necessary, and in so doing attains the mastery also over that which is accidental.

The longer I live, the more it pains me to see man, who occupies his supreme place for the very purpose of obtaining a command over nature and freeing himself and his fellow-creatures from the violent force of necessity,—to see him, influenced by some preconceived and false notion, doing just the opposite of that which he wants to do; and

then, because his whole design has been marred, bungling miserably over everything.

To the strenuous and active man I would say: earn for thyself and expect:

from the great—grace;
from the powerful—favour;
from the active and the good—advancement;
from the many—affection;
from the individual—love.

Tell me with whom thou dost associate, and I will tell thee who thou art. If I know wherewith thou busiest thyself, I know what can be made of thee.

Every man must think after his own manner; for in his own path he always finds a truth, or a kind of truth, which helps him through life. Only he must not let himself go; he must keep a control over himself; bare instinct alone does not befit him.

Unqualified activity, of any kind whatsoever, will at last lead to bankruptcy.

In the works of man, as in those of nature, it is really the motives which chiefly merit attention.

Men become perplexed at themselves and at others, because they treat the means as the end, and so, from sheer doing, they do nothing or, perhaps, just the opposite of what they want to do.

Our plans, our resolves, should be so perfect in purity and beauty that the world could only mar them. We should thus retain the advantage of setting right that which is out of place and of restoring that which is destroyed.

Not without much difficulty and trouble can whole-, half-, and quarter-errors be adjusted and sifted and the portion of truth assigned to its proper place.

It is not always necessary that the truth should be embodied or made corporeal; it is enough if it hovers about us like a spirit and produces harmony; if it vibrates through the air, grave and kindly, like the sound of a bell.

General ideas and great conceit are always in a fair way to cause terrible mischief.

By blowing alone, you cannot play the flute; you must also use your fingers.

remind such a one: that man, in his fragile craft, has been entrusted with a rudder for the very reason that he may obey the will of his insight and not leave himself at the mercy of the waves.

But how is a young man to succeed by himself in looking upon that as censurable and harmful which every one does, approves, and furthers? Why should not he likewise allow himself and his nature to drift with the rest?

I must hold it to be the greatest calamity of our time—a time which allows nothing to reach maturity—that each moment is spent in consuming the preceding one, the day wastes the day, and thus we always live from hand to mouth without achieving anything. Why, we have already newspapers for every hour of the day! A clever head could assuredly intercalate one or other of them. By their means every thing that every one does, or is occupied with, or meditating, nay, even his very designs, are dragged forth into publicity. No one may rejoice or suffer but as a pastime for others; and so it goes on from house to house, from town to town, from kingdom to kingdom, and at last from continent to continent,—all helter-skelter.

As little as you can stifle a steam-engine, so little can you do so in a moral sphere either. The activity of commerce, the continual rustle of paper-money, the accumulation of debts in order to pay debts,—all these form the monstrous

elements to which a young man is nowadays exposed. Well is it for him if he is endowed by nature with a calm and temperate mind, so as neither to make disproportionate claims upon the world, nor yet leave his position to be determined by the world.

But in every direction he is threatened by the spirit of the day, and nothing is more needful than to make him discover at an early stage the direction in which his will is to steer.

The significance of the most innocent words and actions grows with the years; and to those whom I behold around me for any length of time, I constantly try to point out the difference which exists between straightforwardness, confidence, and indiscretion; nay, that there is in reality no difference at all, but merely a gentle transition from what is most innocent to what is most harmful,—a transition which has to be observed, or rather, felt.

Now herein we have to exercise our tact, or else, in the very way in which we have acquired the favour of our fellow-men, we run the risk of quite unexpectedly trifling it away again. This is a lesson which we should doubtless learn for ourselves in the course of life, but only after we have paid heavy fees for our experience,—an expenditure which, unfortunately, we cannot spare our posterity.

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

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The relation of the arts and sciences towards life varies considerably according to the respective stages which they have reached, the condition of the times, and a thousand other contingencies; and for this reason it is not easy for any one to clearly understand the matter as a whole.

Poetry, as a rule, exerts the greatest influence either when a community is in its infancy, whether it be altogether crude or only half-cultivated, or else when its culture is undergoing a transformation and it becomes alive to some new or foreign culture. It may consequently be said that the effect of novelty invariably makes itself felt.

Music, in the highest sense, stands less in need of novelty. On the contrary, the older it is and the more we are accustomed to it, the greater the effect which it produces upon us.

The dignity of art appears to the greatest advantage perhaps in music, because that art contains no material to be deducted. It is wholly form and intrinsic value, and it elevates and ennobles everything which it expresses.

Music is religious or secular. The religious element is quite in accordance with its dignity, and here it produces the greatest influence upon life; which influence remains

unaltered throughout all times and epochs. Secular music should be essentially light and gay.

Music which combines the religious character with the profane is ungodly; it is neither one thing nor the other. Music that finds delight in giving expression to weak, woeful, pitiable feelings, is insipid. For it is not serious enough to be religious, and for the reverse the essential characteristic, namely, gaiety, is wanting.

The holiness of church-music, the gaiety and lightness of popular ballads, are the two hinges upon which true music turns. Based upon these, it will at all times produce an infallible effect: devotion or dancing. If the music is too complicated, it confuses the listeners; if it is too weak, they find it dull; and if it is applied to didactic or descriptive poems and such-like, it becomes cold.

Plastic art is really effective only in its highest stage; all that is mediocre may impress from more causes than one, but all mediocre works of art of this nature will confuse the spectator rather than delight him. Sculpture has therefore also to seek for itself a material interest, and this it finds in the images of famous men. But here, too, it must reach a high level, if it would combine truth and dignity.

Painting is the most venial and the most comfortable of all the arts. The most venial, because even in cases where it is merely a trade and scarcely deserves the name of an art, much allowance is made for it, and it is even appreciated on account of the material and the subject; partly because a technical, though spiritless, execution arouses the astonishment of the uncultured and the cultured alike, so that it needs but to be slightly exalted to the level of an art and it will be received with a still higher degree of favour. Truth in colours and surfaces, in the relation of visible objects to one another, is of itself pleasing; and since the eye is accustomed, as it is, to look upon everything, a deformed object, and consequently also a deformed picture, will not be so repugnant to it as a discord to the ear. The worst delineation is allowed to pass, because one is used to beholding still worse objects in actual life. The painter need therefore be only to a slight degree artist, and he will already find a larger public than will a musician who stands upon the same level; at all events the inferior painter can always operate by himself, whereas the second-rate musician has to associate with others in order to turn his efficiency to advantage by performing in combination with them.

To the question as to whether, in contemplating artistic productions, one should institute comparisons or not, we would reply as follows: The cultured connoisseur must compare; for the idea is ever present in his mind, he has framed a conception, of what could and should be done. The amateur, who is actually engaged in developing himself, will profit most by not drawing comparisons, but by

contemplating each point of merit by itself; for thus the capacity for appreciating the more universal will gradually be developed within him. Comparing, on the part of the ignorant, is after all merely a convenience whereby they would fain save themselves the task of pronouncing a critical judgment.

Love of truth shows itself in our knowing how to find and value the good in everything.

A historical sense is one which is so formed that, in seeking to estimate contemporary merits and deserts, it knows how to take account also of the past.

The best that history has to give us is the enthusiasm which it arouses.

Character calls forth character.

It must be borne in mind that there are many men who, without being productive, yet want to say something significant; and thus the most curious things are brought to light.

Men who think deeply and earnestly are placed in an awkward position with regard to the public.

If I am to listen to the opinion of another person, it must be expressed positively. Of things problematical I have enough in myself.

Superstition forms an essential part of our nature; and when we imagine that we are driving it out altogether, it takes refuge in the strangest nooks and corners, from which it suddenly emerges once more as soon as it believes itself to be at all safe.

I remain silent with regard to many things; for I do not want to confuse or embarrass people, and I am quite content if they are pleased with things at which I am vexed.

Every thing that frees our spirit without giving us the mastery over ourselves is pernicious.

In a work of art, the question *what* interests men far more than the *how*: the former they can comprehend each one for himself, the latter they are together unable to grasp. Hence comes the practice of laying stress upon particular parts, in which, if we pay careful attention, we shall ultimately find that the effect of totality is not wanting, even though it remained unnoticed by every one.

The query: *whence* did the poet derive such and such a

thing, applies only to the question *what*; of the *how* no one can find out anything.

The imagination is regulated by art alone, and especially by poetry. There is nothing so horrible as imagination devoid of taste.

The poet is dependent upon representation. The latter reaches its highest point when it emulates reality; that is to say, when the descriptions it gives us are rendered in so vivid and spirited a manner that every one might look upon them as actually occurring. At its highest, poetry appears entirely external; the further inwards it retreats, the lower it sinks. Poetry which represents only things internal without embodying them in an external garb, or without letting the external part be felt through the internal, forms the stepping-stone between poetry in general and everyday life.

The art of rhetoric avails itself of all the rights and privileges of poetry. It takes possession of them and abuses them merely in order to obtain certain external, momentary advantages, moral or otherwise, in ordinary life.

Lord Byron's is a talent which, though its development has been wild and uneasy, has yet attained a natural state of truth and greatness; and on this account there is scarcely any other to be compared to him.

The essential value of the so-called popular ballads consists in the fact that their motives are taken directly from nature. Yet the cultured poet, too, could avail himself of this advantage, if he but understood it.

He is, however, placed at this disadvantage, that ordinary human beings are always better skilled in the art of expressing things concisely than those who are really cultured.

Of history no one can judge who has not himself experienced history. So, too, with entire nations. The Germans are only now able to judge of literature since they have a literature of their own.

We are really alive only when we find delight in the goodwill of others.

Piety is not an end, but a means: a means of attaining the highest culture through the purest tranquillity of soul.

Hence it may be observed that those who set up piety as their ultimate aim and goal, mostly end by becoming hypocrites.

All abstraction is brought nearer to the human understanding by being applied; and the human understanding, on the other hand, arrives, by means of action and observation, at abstraction.

He who demands too much and delights in complexity, lays himself open to error.

- Thinking by means of analogies is not to be condemned. Analogy has the advantage of not closing an argument and of never really pretending to be final and conclusive: induction, on the other hand, is harmful when, having a pre-appointed object in view and working in the direction of the same, it tears the false and the true along with it.
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Ordinary intuition, a correct view of earthly things, is a heritage of the universal human understanding.

Pure intuition of that which is without and within is extremely rare.

The former is displayed in the practical sense, in direct dealing; the latter is evinced symbolically, especially in mathematics, in numbers and forms, in words, primordial, figurative, as in the poetry of a genius, or the proverbialism of the human understanding.

That which is absent influences us by means of tradition. The ordinary form may be termed historical; a higher form related to the imagination is mythical. If we go beyond this and seek a third form that may have any meaning, it will be transformed into mysticism. It will moreover easily become sentimental, so that we appropriate only as much as suits our taste.

In contemplation, as in action, the attainable must be distinguished from the unattainable; without this, little can be achieved, either in life or in knowledge.

*Le sens commun est le génie de l'humanité.*¹ Common sense, which is here described as the genius of humanity, must first of all be examined in its manifestations. If we inquire for what purpose humanity employs it, we discover the following.

Humanity is conditioned by its wants. If these remain unsatisfied, people turn impatient; if they are satisfied, people seem to remain unaffected thereby. Man is therefore swayed between these two conditions; and he employs his understanding, his so called common sense, in order to satisfy his needs. When this has been done, he has the problem of filling up the intervals of indifference. And if his needs are restricted to what is nearest and most necessary, he succeeds. But if they become greater and

¹ I have so far been unable to trace the author of these words. Doanet somewhere remarks that "le bon sens est le maître de la vie humaine."—Tr.

leave the sphere of ordinary wants, then common sense will no longer suffice, it will no longer be the genius, and humanity will enter into the region of error.

Nothing foolish ever happens which intelligence or accident is unable to set aright; and nothing wise, which a want of intelligence or an accident could not mar.

Every great idea, when it at first appears, exercises a tyrannous influence. Hence the advantages which it brings about are all too quickly transformed into disadvantages. It would consequently be possible to defend and praise any and every institution, if its beginnings were but called to mind and it could be shown that all that was true of it at the commencement were true of it still.

Lessing, who fretted under many limitations, makes one of his characters say: No man *must* do anything. A clever and good-natured man once remarked: He who *wills* something, must do it. A third, who, was certainly an educated man, added: He who comprehends, also *wills*. And thus the whole circle of knowledge, will, and necessity, was considered to have been completed. But, as a rule, a man's knowledge, of whatever kind it be, determines what he shall do and what he shall leave undone. And so it follows that there is nothing more terrible than to see ignorance in action.

There are two powers that tend towards peace, namely, the sense of right and the sense of fitness.

Justice insists on obligation, law on decorum. Justice is critical and discriminating; law is supervisory and commanding. Justice refers to the individual, law to the community.

The history of knowledge is a great fugue in which the voices of the various nations appear one after the other.

If a man is to accomplish all that is demanded of him, he must deem himself greater than he is. So long as he does not carry this to an absurd length, we readily put up with it.

Work makes the companion.

Certain books seem to have been written, not in order to afford us any instruction, but merely for the purpose of letting us know that their authors knew something.

It is much easier to place oneself in the position of a mind involved in the most absolute error than of one which delusively mirrors half-truths to itself.

The greatest regard which an author can show for his public consists in never giving the latter that which it expects, but that which he, for the time being, deems to be right and proper, in the existing stage of his own and others' culture.

Wisdom lies only in truth.

• If I err, every one can notice it, but not if I lie.

Is not the world full enough of riddles already, without our making riddles also out of the simplest phenomena ?

What I have tried to do in the course of my life through false tendencies, I have at last learnt to understand.

Generosity will win favour for any one, especially when it is accompanied by humility.

Before the storm breaks, we see violently rising for the last time the dust that is shortly to be laid for a long spell.

In the creation of species, Nature drifts, as it were, into an *impasse*; she cannot proceed any further forwards, and is unwilling to turn back. Hence the pertinacity of national character.

Each of us has something in his nature which, if it were openly expressed, would be sure to excite displeasure.

• If a man stops to ponder over his physical or moral condition, he generally discovers that he is ill.

Nature demands that a man should now and then be stupefied without falling asleep. Hence the pleasure occasioned by smoking tobacco, drinking brandy, and indulging in opiates.

The really capable man is bent upon doing that which is right. Whether that which is done is right, ought not to trouble him.

Many a man strikes the wall at random with his hammer and is under the impression that he hits the nail on the head every time.

Accidental truths, in which we discern no trace of either natural law or momentary freedom, we term commonplace.

Painting and tattooing the body is a return to the brute-stage.

The writing of history is a method of getting rid of the past.

That which we do not understand, we do not possess.

Not every one who is made the possessor of a pregnant idea is thereby moved to productiveness; such a person is as a rule merely reminded of something with which he was already familiar.

Favour, as a symbol of sovereignty, is practised by weak men.

There is nothing commonplace which could not be made to appear humorous if quaintly expressed.

Every one has always enough power left to carry his convictions into effect.

Your memory may vanish, provided that at the moment your judgment does not fail you.

The so-called Nature-poets are fresh and newly-created talents, repelled by an over-cultured and stagnant art-period abounding in affectation. They cannot themselves evade the insipid and commonplace, and may thus be regarded as retrograde. Yet they are regenerative and open out the way for a further advance.

No nation acquires the power of judgment unless it can pass judgment upon itself. But to this great privilege it can only attain at a very late stage.

Instead of contradicting my words, men should act in my spirit.

All those who oppose intellectual truths merely stir up the fire ; the cinders fly about and set fire to that which else they had not touched !

Man would not be the most important creature in the world, if he were not too important for it.

That which has long ago been discovered is buried afresh. What pains Tycho gave himself to establish the regularity of the comets—a fact which Seneca had long ago recognised !

Productions are to-day rendered possible, which have no value although they are not altogether bad: they have no value, because they contain nothing; and they are not altogether bad, because a general form of good workmanship directs the minds of their authors.

He who shrinks from ideas will end by no longer framing any conceptions.

We rightly call those our masters, from whom we are always learning; but not every one who teaches us something deserves that title.

All lyrical writings ought to be rational as a whole, and a trifle irrational in detail.

Your nature may be compared to that of the sea, to which we give the most varied names, whereas it is after all nothing but salt water.

Vain self-praise, we are told, stinks in the nostrils. That may be so; yet for the smell which arises from the bestowal of unjust blame by others the public has no nose at all.

The novel is a subjective epopee, in which the author

asks to be allowed to treat of the world after his own method. The only question, therefore, is whether he has any method of his own; the rest will come of itself.

There are some problematical natures which are unequal to any position in which they may find themselves and which no position can satisfy. Hence arises that frightful conflict which wastes life and robs it of all enjoyment.

The real good that we do is mostly brought about *clam, vi et precario*.

Dirt glitters when the sun is shining upon it.

The miller thinks that the wheat only grows in order to keep his mill going.

It is difficult to be just to the passing moment. If it is indifferent, we find it tedious; if good, it lays a task upon us; if bad, it imposes a burden.

He is the most fortunate of men, who can trace an unbroken connection between the end of his life and the beginning.

it was said of a certain man of extraordinary parts that, whereas the evils of the age had caused his error, the force of his soul had made him emerge therefrom with glory.

Each one of us has his peculiarities, of which he is unable to divest himself. And yet many a man is brought to destruction by his peculiarities, and those, too, of the most innocent kind.

He who does not think much of himself is greater than he believes himself to be.

In art and knowledge, as also in deed and action, all depends upon whether the objects are clearly apprehended and treated in accordance with their nature.

If intelligent, thoughtful persons are inclined to despise knowledge in their old age, this is only because they have demanded too much from it and from themselves.

I feel pity for those persons who make so much ado about the transitoriness of all things and lose themselves in the contemplation of earthly vanity. Why, we are here for the very purpose of making the transitory imperishable, and this can be done only if we know how to appreciate both conditions.

It used to happen, and still happens at times, that I derive no pleasure from a work of plastic art when I behold it for the first time, for the reason that I am not competent to appreciate it. But if I suspect any merit in it, I endeavour to get at it; and this often leads to the most gratifying discoveries: I begin to find new qualities in the work and new faculties in myself.

Faith is private capital, stored in one's own house. It is like a public savings-bank or loan-office, from which individuals receive assistance in their days of need; but here the creditor quietly takes his interest for himself.

Obscurantism, properly speaking, consists, not in hindering the dissemination of those things which are true, clear, and useful, but in putting what is false into circulation.

During a prolonged study of the biographies of various men both great and small, the following thought occurred to me: In the web of the world, the one may well be regarded as the warp, the other as the woof. The small men, after all, give breadth to the web, the great ones supply firmness and solidity, and in addition perhaps also some kind of pattern. But the scissors of Atropos, on the other hand, determine the length, and to that all the rest has to yield. We will not, however, pursue the comparison any further.

Books also have their experiences, which cannot be taken away from them.

“ Who ne’er in weeping ate his bread,
Who ne’er throughout the night’s sad hours
Hath sat in tears upon his bed,
He knows you not, ye Heavenly Powers ! ”¹

These most pathetic lines were once repeated by a highly accomplished and erstwhile honoured queen,² who had been condemned to endure boundless woe. During her cruel exile she became acquainted with the book containing, in addition to many another painful experience, the words which I have quoted above, and from it derived a sorrowful consolation. Who is there that could venture to arrest so far-reaching an influence as this ?

Truth is a torch, but it is a huge one. This is why we all of us try to steal past it with blinking eyes, and afraid lest we may be burnt.

The one really unintelligent feature in many persons who are otherwise intelligent, consists in their inability to comprehend what is said by others, if the latter happen not to express themselves quite as clearly as they ought.

One has only to grow old in order to become less critical.

¹ This verse is taken from one of the songs of the old harper in “Wilhelm Meister.”—TR.

² Goethe here refers to Queen Louise of Prussia.—TR.

I see no error made which I might not have committed myself.

The man who acts is always devoid of conscience. No one has any conscience except the man who pauses to reflect.

There are persons whom I wish well, and would that I could wish better.

Hatred is an active displeasure, envy a passive. It ought, therefore, not to surprise us that envy turns so soon to hatred.

There is something magical in rhythm; it even makes us believe that the sublime lies within our reach.

Dilettantism, treated seriously, and knowledge, pursued mechanically, lead to pedantry.

No one but the master is able to promote the interests of art. Patrons may promote the artist, which is a very good thing in its way; only it does not always follow that the interests of art are thereby promoted.

The most foolish error of all is made by clever young men in thinking that they forfeit their originality if they recognise a truth which has already been recognised by others.

Scholars are mostly invidious when they are confuting others; they forthwith look upon any person who is in error as their mortal enemy.

Beauty can never learn to clearly understand itself.

When once the same privileges were conceded to subjective or so-called sentimental poetry as to objective and descriptive poetry,—a step which was, after all, hardly to be avoided, because otherwise the whole field of modern poetry would have been proscribed,—it became apparent that when men of truly poetic genius appeared, they would deal far more with the emotions and feelings of the inner life than with the general aspect of the great life of the world. This tendency has already been cultivated to such a degree that we have a form of poetry devoid of figures of speech, which, however, is by no means undeserving of praise.

It is far easier to recognise error than to discover truth. The former lies upon the surface, and may be overcome; the latter reposes in the depths, and it is not given to every one to search for it.

GOETHE.

We all of us live upon the past, and through the past we are destroyed.

No sooner are we to learn some great lesson than we at once take refuge in our own innate poverty of soul; and yet we always end by learning something.

The world of empirical morality consists for the most part of nothing but ill-will and envy.

Superstition is the poetry of life; the poet, therefore, suffers no harm from being superstitious.

However commonplace our lives may appear, however easily they may seem to be satisfied with the ordinary course of daily routine, yet in secret they always foster and cherish certain higher claims, and look about them for means wherewith to satisfy those claims.

Confidences are strange things. If you listen to one individual, he may possibly be mistaken or deceived; if you listen to many, they are in the same position; and so the truth, as a rule, remains undiscovered.

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

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We should not desire to see any one live in irregular circumstances; but if a man is accidentally drawn into them, they test his character and reveal the amount of resolution of which he is capable.

A man who, though limited in ideas, is yet honourable in character, will often see through the rogues of the most cunning jobbers.

He who feels no love must learn to flatter; otherwise he will not succeed.

Against criticism a man can neither protest nor defend himself. He must act in spite of it, and then criticism will gradually give in to him.

The masses cannot get on without men of energy and ability, and yet the latter are always a burden to them.

The man who discloses my failings to others is my master, even though he be my servant.

If you claim duties from people and refuse to grant them any privileges in return, you must pay them well.

The so-called romantic character of any particular spot arises from a calm feeling of the sublime in the form of the past, or of solitude, absence, or seclusion, which comes to the same thing.

That glorious hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, is essentially an invocation to genius. For this reason it appeals so forcibly to men of intellect and power.

The beautiful is a manifestation of secret laws of nature, which, without its presence, would for ever have remained concealed.

I can promise to be sincere, but not to be impartial.

Ingratitude is always a form of weakness. I have never known a man of real ability to be ungrateful.

We are all of us so restricted in our ideas that we always believe ourselves to be in the right; and so it is easy to imagine a person of really great intellect not only erring, but even finding pleasure in error.

A pure and steady activity in the accomplishment of that which is good and right is very rarely to be met with. We

mostly see pedantry striving to keep back, and audacity striving to hasten on too fast.

Word and picture are correlatives which are constantly verging upon each other, as we may see from figures of speech and similes. And so at all times that which was said or sung inwardly to the ear, had likewise to be presented to the eye. So also in our childish days we see word and picture continually balanced: in the book of the law and in the way of salvation, in the Bible and in the spelling-book. When people spoke of something which could not be pictured, and pictured something which could not be spoken, all went well. But they often made mistakes and employed a word instead of a picture, and this gave rise to a twofold evil in the shape of those monsters of symbolic mysticism.

A collection of anecdotes and maxims is of the greatest advantage to the man of the world, if he knows how to introduce the one in an adroit manner into his conversation at fitting moments, and to call the other to mind when the occasion arises.

The artist is told to go and study nature. But it is no small matter to evolve the lofty out of the commonplace, or beauty out of formlessness.

When one loses one's interest in anything, one also loses the memory for it.

The importunity of young dilettanti should be borne with goodwill, for as they grow older they become the truest worshippers of art and the master.

Clever persons are always the best encyclopædia.

There are people who commit no errors, for the simple reason that they never make up their minds to do anything sensible.

If I know my relation to myself and to the outer world, I call it truth. And so every one can have his own truth; and yet it always remains the same.

The particular is ever subordinate to the universal, and the universal must ever adapt itself to the particular.

No one is master of any real productive energy, and all must simply let it take its own course.

A frivolous and eager encouragement of problematical talents was an error of my younger days, and one which I have never been able to abandon altogether.

It is all the same whether a man is of a high or low degree; for the human element amends have always to be made.

When I hear persons talking of liberal ideas, I am always surprised to see how readily they are put off with the sound of empty words. An idea cannot be liberal; it may be forcible, vigorous, independent, so as to fulfil its sacred mission of being productive. Still less can a concept be liberal, for its mission is quite another one. But it is in the sentiments that we have to look for liberality, and they it is that form the living mind. Yet sentiments are rarely liberal, for a sentiment proceeds directly from the person himself and from his immediate relations and demands. We will not add anything further; but by this test let men judge of the things they hear every day.

If a clever man commits a folly, it is no small one.

In every work of art, from the greatest unto the smallest, everything depends upon the conception.

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

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There is a poetry without figures of speech which is itself a single figure of speech.

Excellences are unfathomable, do with them what you will.

I went on troubling myself about general ideas, until at length I learnt to understand what men of merit can achieve in particular directions.

It is only when a man knows but little that he, properly speaking, knows anything at all. Doubt grows with knowledge.

It is really the errors of a man that make him lovable.

There are men who love their like and seek it; and others, again, who love their opposite and are attracted by it.

Any man who always allows himself to consider the world as bad as the adversary makes it out to be, must in the end become a miserable creature.

By ill-will and hatred a man's observation is limited to

the surface of things, even though those qualities be accompanied by a keen perception. But if the latter goes hand in hand with good-will and love, it is able to penetrate into the heart of man and the world, and may even attain to the supreme goal.

An English critic credits me with possessing "panoramic ability,"—for which I am deeply indebted to him.

The raw material every one sees before him ; the content is discovered by him alone who has to deal with it ; and the form is a secret to most people.

It is their inclinations that serve to keep men alive ; youth develops itself anew by being brought into contact with youth.

However well we may learn to know the world, it will always retain a bright and a dark side.

Error continually repeats itself in action ; for this reason we must never tire of repeating the truth in word.

As in Rome there was, in addition to the Romans, also a population of statues, so too there is, in addition to this

real world, a world of illusion which is far more potent than the other, and in which the majority of persons live.

Human beings are like the Red Sea : no sooner has the rod parted them asunder than they at once flow together again.

•The duty of the historian consists in distinguishing the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain, and the doubtful from that which must be rejected.

Chronicles are written only by those men to whom the present is of importance.

Our thoughts recur ; our convictions become rooted ; facts pass away never to return.

“Of all peoples the Greeks have dreamt the dream of life the best.”

Translators may be compared to busy match-makers who extol the charms of some half-veiled beauty to us as though she were most lovable ; they arouse an irresistible longing for the original.

We readily submit to antiquity, but not to posterity. It is only a father that does not begrudge his son's talent.

There is no particular merit in subordinating oneself; but there is merit, inversely, in descending and recognising anything as being above us which is beneath us.

The whole art of living consists in giving up our existence in order to exist.

All our actions and pursuits tend to exhaust us; fortunate is he who does not grow weary.

"Hope is the second soul of the unhappy."

"Love is a true renovator."

There is no limit to the increase of experience, but theories cannot in like manner become clearer and more perfect. To the former the universe lies open in all directions; the latter, on the other hand, are confined within the range of the human faculties. Therefore all modes of looking at the world must repeat themselves; and

this leads to a curious result, namely, that with extended experience a limited theory may again come into favour.

It is always the same world which stands open to observation, which is constantly contemplated or guessed at; and it is always the same persons who live in the true or in the false, more at ease in the latter than in the former.

Truth is contradictory to our nature; error is not so, and for a very simple reason: truth demands that we should recognise our limitations, whereas error flatters us by making us believe that in one way or another we are not circumscribed at all.

That some men imagine themselves still able to do those things which they have before been able to do, is quite natural; that others, again, believe they can do things which they have never been able to do, is indeed strange, but by no means rare.

It has at all times been the individuals alone that have worked for knowledge, and not the age. It was the age which put Socrates to death by poison; it was the age which burnt Huss at the stake. The ages have always remained alike.

That is true Symbolism in which the particular represents the universal, not as a dream or a shadow, but as a living, instantaneous revelation of the Inscrutable.

Mastery often passes for egoism.

With Protestants, as soon as good works and their merits, pass away, sentimentality takes their place.

To obtain sound advice from others is as good as though one could provide it oneself.

Despotism promotes general self-government, for from top to bottom it saddles the individual with responsibility, and thus calls forth the highest degree of activity.

Spinozism in poetry becomes Machiavellism in philosophy.

A man has to pay heavily to wipe out his errors, and even then he may consider himself fortunate.

Even art is not free from pretenders, for there, too, we

encounter dilettanti and adventurers; the former cultivate art for the sake of amusement, the latter for gain.

There is a kind of reflective enthusiasm which is of the highest value, provided one is not carried away by it.

School itself is in reality only the preparatory school of life.

Error stands in the same relation to truth as sleeping to waking. I have seen persons, on being aroused from error, turn once more to truth with renewed vigour.

He who does not work for himself has to suffer. A man works for others in order that they may share his enjoyment.

Things intelligible belong to the perception of the senses and to the understanding. To these must be added decorum, which is akin to tact. Decorum, however, is always regulated according to the times and circumstances.

In reality we learn only from those books which we cannot criticise. The author of a book which we could criticise would have something to learn from us.

The reason why the Bible has such an unceasing influence is because no one, as long as the world endures, will ever arise and say: I grasp the work as a whole, and understand it in all its parts. But we say humbly: as a whole let us respect it, and in its parts apply it.

All mysticism is transcendental, and occupies itself with resolving a subject which one imagines one has left far behind one. The greater and more significant that which one abandons, the more copious will the productions of the mystic be.

Oriental mystic poetry has for this reason such prominence, because the riches of the world, which the alchemist renounces, always remain at his command. Thus he is ever surrounded by that wealth which he abandons, and revels in that of which he yearns to rid himself.

Christianity ought not to number any mystics among its followers, for the religion itself offers us mysteries enough. Such persons, moreover, fly at once to abstruseness and take refuge in the abysses of their subject.

A clever man once remarked that the newer mysticism is the dialectics of the heart, and that the reason why it is often so wonderful and seductive is because it gives rise to utterances at which men would never arrive by the ordinary

paths of common-sense, reason, or religion. He who fancies that he has the courage and power to study it without allowing himself to be stupefied, may venture to penetrate into this cave of Trophonius; but if so, he does it at his own peril.

Men's prejudices depend upon their individual characters; therefore, when they are closely united to the circumstances, they are insurmountable. Neither evidence, nor common-sense, nor reason, has the slightest effect upon them.

Characters often make a law of their weaknesses. Men who know the world have said: Prudence, behind which fear lies concealed, cannot be overcome. Weak men often hold revolutionary views: they opine that they would be better off if they were not ruled, and fail to see that they can rule neither themselves nor others.

Common-sense is born pure in the healthy human being, is self-developed, and reveals itself by a resolute perception and recognition of what is necessary and useful. Practical men and women avail themselves thereof with confidence. When it is absent, both sexes consider anything that they may desire a necessity, and anything that gives them pleasure an object of utility.

All men, as they attain freedom, indulge their errors;

the powerful carry things to excess, the weak accomplish too little.

The conflict of the old, the existing, the continuing, with development, improvement, and reform, is always the same. All order at last leads to pedantry; and, in order to get rid of the latter, men destroy the former, and some time elapses ere they discover that order has to be established afresh. Classicism *versus* romanticism, close corporations *versus* freedom of trade, the retention of large estates *versus* the nationalisation of the land,—it is always the same conflict which ends by producing a new one. The wisest course open to those who are in power would therefore be to so moderate this contest that it might be evenly balanced without either the one or the other side being worsted. Yet this it has not been given to men to achieve, nor does it seem to be the will of God.

All works of magnitude limit us for the moment, because we do not feel ourselves equal to them; and only in so far as we afterwards embody them in our culture and make them part and parcel of our minds and hearts, will they become precious and valuable to us.

It is no wonder that we are all of us more or less pleased with the mediocre, for it leaves us in peace; we experience the comfortable feeling of associating with that which is like ourselves.

It is useless for us to denounce the vulgar and commonplace, for it will ever remain the same.

We cannot evade a contradiction in ourselves; all we can do is to try and readjust it. But if the contradiction comes from others, we need not heed it; that is their business.

I am asked: which is the best government? That which teaches us to govern ourselves.

If men have to do with women, they will be spun off as from a distaff.

It may easily happen that a man is fearfully threshed at times by misfortunes both public and private. Yet heedless fate, when it strikes the rich sheaves, presses the straw only, whilst the corn feels nothing of it but leaps merrily to and fro on the threshing-floor, careless as to whether it is destined for the mill or for the corn-field.

The greatest probability of any expectation being fulfilled still admits of some measure of doubt. This is why our expectations, when they are realised, invariably surprise us.

We show the same consideration for old age as we show for childhood.

An old man is deprived of one of the greatest privileges of humanity: he is no longer judged by his equals.

In the search after knowledge it has happened to me as to one who, after rising in the dark, impatiently awaits the dawn and then the rising sun, and yet is dazzled when it appears.

Men often dispute, and will continue to do so, with regard to the use and abuse of circulating the Bible. To me the matter is perfectly clear: it will do harm, just as it has done hitherto, if used for dogmatic and fanciful purposes; and it will do good, just as hitherto, if its teachings are accepted in a sympathetic spirit.

Great and original powers, whether existing from the beginning or evolved in the course of time, work on unceasingly; whether for good or for evil, depends on chance.

The Idea is one and eternal; nor is it proper that we should use the word in the plural. All the things of which we become cognisant and are able to speak, are but

The mimetic art of dancing would ultimately prove the ruin of all plastic art, and rightly too. Fortunately, however, the charm which it exercises upon the senses is of fleeting duration, and, in order to entrance us, it has to have recourse to exaggeration. This frightens away the other artists at once; yet, if they were prudent and careful, they might derive a great deal of instruction from it.

* When Madame Roland was upon the scaffold, she asked for writing materials, so that she might record the peculiar thoughts which crowded in upon her on her last journey. It is to be regretted that her request was not complied with, for, at the end of life, a collected mind is seized with thoughts hitherto unthinkable; they are like blessed spirits of fate alighting in glory upon the summits of the past.

People often say to themselves in the course of their lives that they should avoid a variety of occupation, and, more especially as they grow older, feel the less inclination to enter upon any new work. But it is all very well to talk thus and give advice to oneself and to others. To grow old is in itself to enter upon a new business; all the circumstances are changed, and a man must either cease altogether from acting or else willingly and consciously take over his new *rôle*.

Of the Absolute in the theoretical sense I will not venture to speak; yet this I may maintain: that he who recognises

it in its manifestations and ever keeps his gaze directed towards it, will derive very great reward therefrom.

To live in the Idea means treating the impossible as though it were possible. The same thing applies to Character: if both an Idea and a Character come together, they give rise to events which fill the world with amazement for thousands of years.

Napoleon, who lived altogether in the Idea, was nevertheless unable to consciously grasp it; he utterly disavowed all ideals and denied them the smallest particle of reality, the while he was zealously striving to realise them. But his clear and incorruptible intellect could not endure such a perpetual inner conflict; and it is very interesting to note the peculiar and charming manner in which, under compulsion, as it were, he expresses his views upon it.

He considered the Idea as a thing of the mind which has no actual reality, but which, when it vanishes, leaves behind it a residuum (*caput mortuum*) to which we cannot altogether deny some measure of reality. This may to us appear a decidedly perverse and material view; yet he expressed himself quite differently when entertaining his friends, in entire belief and confidence, with the never-ceasing consequences of his life and actions. Then, indeed, he readily admitted that life produces life, and that a

fruitful act is effective for all time. He was glad to acknowledge that he had given a fresh impulse, a new direction, to the course of the world.

Literature is a fragment of fragments. Only the smallest portion of that which happened and was spoken has been recorded; and of that which has been recorded only the smallest portion has been preserved.

And yet in this imperfect condition of literature we find thousandfold repetition; whence it is evident how circumscribed are the mind and destiny of man.

To the several perversities of the day a man should always oppose only the great masses of universal history.

The question: which of the two occupies a higher position, the historian or the poet, is one which should never be raised. They do not compete with each other any more than do the racer and the boxer. Each one has his own laurels.

The duty of a historian is twofold: in the first place, towards himself, and, in the second, towards his readers. As for himself, he must carefully examine into what could have occurred; and for the sake of his readers he must

determine what actually did occur. How he performs his duty towards himself is a question between himself and his colleagues; but the public must not be let into the secret that there is but very little in history which can be laid down as actually verified.

It is with books as with new acquaintances. At first we are delighted if we find that we agree in a general way, if we feel a friendly influence upon any of the chief sides of our existence. It is only upon a closer acquaintanceship that the points of difference become apparent, and then the value of reasonable conduct lies, not in shrinking back at once, as is often the case with children, but in holding fast to the things in which we agree, and arriving at a clear understanding about the things in which we differ, without on that account wishing to come to an agreement upon them.

Any one who lives much with children will find that any outward influence upon them never fails to call forth a reaction.

The reaction, in the case of a specially childish nature, is even passionate, whilst its action is energetic.

For this reason children's lives abound in hasty, not

formed, but one-sided, perceptions are dispelled so as to make room for more general ones, some time must elapse. To pay proper heed to this, is one of the main duties of the teacher.

The great difficulty in psychological reflection lies in the fact that the internal and the external must be regarded as running parallel to each other, or rather, as interwoven. It is a continual systole and diastole, inhalation and exhalation, of the living soul. Though we may be unable to express this in words, we should carefully watch and observe it.

My relations with Schiller were based upon the decided trend of both of us towards a single end, and our common activity rested upon the diversity of the means by which we strove to attain that end.

In regard to a slight point of difference which once formed a subject for discussion between us, and of which I am reminded by a passage in one of his letters, I made the following observations:—

It matters a great deal whether the poet is seeking the particular for the universal, or seeing the universal in the particular. The former process gives rise to allegory, in which the particular serves only as an instance or example of the universal; the latter, on the other hand, is the true nature of poetry, it gives expression to the particular

without in any way thinking of, or referring to, the universal. And he who vividly grasps the particular will at the same time also grasp the universal, and will either not become aware of it at all, or will only do so long afterwards.

Whenever, in a large town or in one of a moderate size, I look around me and observe where people go to spend their evenings, I always find that they frequent those places where they greet, and are greeted by, their acquaintances and friends; where they can themselves speak or listen to the conversation of others; where, amid social converse and pastimes, each one is always sure of finding a kindred spirit.

Friendship can only be formed and gain duration in practice. Inclination and even love itself are of no avail at all to friendship. True, active, productive friendship consists in this: that we should keep equal pace in life; that my friend should approve of my aims and I of his; and that thus we should continue steadfastly advancing, notwithstanding any difference that may exist in our mode of living and thinking.

In this world every man is estimated at his own value; only he must value himself at something. It is easier to bear with people who are unpleasant than with those who are insignificant.

One can force anything upon society, provided it has no sequel.

We do not learn to know men through their coming to us. To find out what sort of persons they are, we must go to them.

- It seems to me almost natural that we should at times find fault with those who visit us, and that, as soon as they have departed, we should judge not too kindly of them; for we have, so to speak, a right to measure them by our own standard. Even sensible and fair-minded persons are, upon such occasions, scarcely able to refrain from sharp censure.
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If, on the other hand, one has called upon others, observed them in their surroundings and habits, and the circumstances that are inevitable and necessary to them; if he has noticed how they influence others around them, and how they conduct themselves: such a person must be both foolish and ill-natured, if he finds cause for ridicule in things that appear to us, in more senses than one, deserving of respect.

By means of that which we term conduct and good manners we have to attain what otherwise is to be attained only by force, or perhaps not even by that.

The society of women is the element of good manners.

How can character, the peculiar individuality of a man, be consistent with good manners?

Through good manners a man's individual character should be brought all the more into prominence. All would like to acquire distinction, if they could only do so without discomfort.

The greatest advantages in life in general, as also in society, fall to the lot of the educated soldier.

Rough soldiers at all events do not forsake their true character; and since, as a rule, there is a certain amount of good-nature concealed behind their brute strength, we can in case of need get on with them.

There is no greater nuisance than a clumsy civilian. From him we at least expect a certain degree of refinement; since he has nothing coarse to occupy him.

If we live with persons who have a fine sense of tact,

we feel anxious on their account whenever any breach of tact is committed.

No one would walk into an assembly with spectacles on his nose, if he knew that women at once lose all inclination to look at or converse with him.

- Familiarity in the place of respectfulness is always ridiculous. No one would take off his hat directly after he has performed his salute, if he knew how ludicrous it looks.
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There is no outward sign of politeness which has not some profound moral reason for its basis. A proper system of education should teach us the sign and the reason at the same time.

A man's deportment is a mirror in which each one displays his image.

There is a politeness of the heart, which is akin to love. It gives rise to the most agreeable politeness of outward conduct.

Voluntary dependence is the finest of states, and how should that be possible without love?

We are never so far removed from our desires as when we imagine that we possess that which we desire.

No one is more of a slave than he who fancies himself free without actually being so.

A man has only to declare himself free and he will at once feel himself dependent. If he ventures to declare himself dependent, he will feel himself free.

Against the superiority of another there is no remedy but love.

It is a terrible thing for a distinguished man to be gloried in by fools.

No man, it is said, is a hero to his valet. But this is merely because it takes a hero to recognise a hero. The valet will probably be quite able to appreciate his equals.

There is no greater consolation for mediocrity than that of knowing that genius is not immortal.

The greatest men are always linked to their age by some weakness or other.

As a rule, we take men to be more dangerous than they really are. Fools and sensible persons are alike harmless. It is only the half-foolish and the half-wise who are the most dangerous.

There is no surer method of evading the world than by following Art, and no surer method of linking oneself to it than by Art.

Even in moments of the highest happiness and of the deepest misery, we stand in need of the artist.

Art occupies itself with that which is difficult and good.

To behold difficult objects lightly handled gives us the impression of the impossible.

Our difficulties increase the nearer we approach our aim.

It is less troublesome to sow than to reap.

We like to look ahead into the future, because our secret wishes induce us to turn in our favour the 'uncertainties which hover to and fro in it.

We rarely find ourselves in the midst of a large assembly without thinking that the chance which brings so many persons together, should also bring our friends thither.

However retired the life which a man may lead, he is always apt to become a debtor or a creditor before he is aware of it.

If we meet a person who is under any obligation to us, we are at once reminded of it. Yet how often it happens that we meet some one to whom we ourselves are under an obligation, without ever thinking of it!

To communicate ourselves to others is Nature; to receive and take up in ourselves that which is communicated to us by others is Culture.

No one would venture to speak much in society, if he were but aware how often one misunderstands others.

The only reason why we so often alter the remarks of others in repeating them, is probably because we have not understood them.

He who speaks for any length of time in the presence of others without flattering his hearers, awakens their displeasure.

Every word that is uttered suggests its contrary.

Contradiction and flattery are, both of them, poor materials for conversation.

The most pleasant society is that in which an attitude of cheerful respect is maintained by its members towards one another.

Nothing serves better to illustrate a man's character than the things which he finds ridiculous.

The ridiculous arises from a moral contrast which is innocently placed before the senses.

The sensual man will often laugh when there is nothing to laugh at. Whatever it may be that moves him, he will always reveal the fact that he is pleased with himself.

The intelligent man finds almost everything ridiculous, the sensible man hardly anything.

A man will allow himself to be taxed with his faults, he will suffer punishment for them, and patiently endure much for their sake; but he becomes impatient if he has to give them up.

Certain faults are necessary to the existence of the individual. We should not like to see old friends lay aside certain of their peculiarities.

We hear it said of a man that he will not live long, if he acts in any way contrary to his usual manner.

What kind of faults may we retain, nay, even cultivate in ourselves? Such as are flattering, rather than harmful, to others.

Our passions are faults or virtues, only intensified.

Our passions are true phœnixes. As soon as the old one is consumed, the new one rises forth from its ashes.

Great passions are hopeless diseases. The very thing which might cure them is that which makes them really dangerous.

Passion may be enhanced and tempered by avowal. In nothing, perhaps, is a middle course more to be desired than in confidence and reticence towards those whom we love.

To sit in judgment upon the departed will probably never be deemed equitable. We all of us suffer during our lives; who, save God, can call us to account? Let those who survive occupy themselves, not with the errors and sufferings of those who have gone before them, but with their deeds and achievements.

The faults reveal the human being, the merits the individual. Faults and misfortunes we all have in common; virtues belong to each one of us separately.

The secret places in the path of life may not and cannot be revealed; there are stumbling-blocks over which every wanderer must fall. But the poet points to where they are.

It would not be worth while to live for seventy years, if all the wisdom of this world were but folly in the sight of God.

The true is godlike; it is not itself revealed to us, we have to infer it from its manifestations.

The genuine scholar learns to evolve the unknown from the known, and in this way approaches the master.

But it is not easy for men to evolve the unknown from the known, for they are unaware that their understanding is just as deceptive as nature.

The gods teach us to imitate their own peculiar works; yet all we know is that which we do; we do not recognise that which we imitate.

Everything is like and yet unlike, everything is both useful and harmful, articulate and dumb, reasonable and unreasonable. And the statements which we make concerning particular objects are oftentimes contradictory.

For law has been imposed upon man by himself, without his knowing for whom or what he laid down the law; but the order of nature has been established by all the gods.

That which men have determined, is out of place, whether it be right or wrong. But that which the gods have ordained, whether it be right or wrong, is always in place.

In the smithy the iron is softened by blowing the fire and taking the dross from the bar; when it has become purified, it is beaten and pressed, and is rendered firm again by the aid of fresh water. So, too, fares it with a man at the hands of his teacher.

Were any one to despise Art on the ground that it imitates Nature, we should reply that Nature herself imitates many other things, and that, furthermore, Art does not merely imitate that which we see with our eyes, but goes back to that element of reason of which Nature consists and according to which she acts.

Art, moreover, evolves many things out of itself, and, on the other hand, adds much to the imperfection of Nature, where such exists, inasmuch as Art contains beauty in itself. Thus Phidias was able to sculpture a god although he did not imitate anything that was visible to the eye, but pictured in his mind how Zeus himself would appear if he were to meet our gaze.

Of that which belongs to a man he cannot rid himself, even though he were to throw it away.

The newest philosophy of our western neighbours furnishes a proof that men, however they may comport themselves, — and in like manner, entire nations, — will ever

return anew to their innate tendencies. And how should it be otherwise, seeing that these determine their nature and mode of living?

The French have renounced materialism, and credited the origin of things with a little more life and spirit; they have severed themselves from sensualism, and allowed to the depths of human nature the faculty of self-development; they grant the existence therein of a productive power, and do not seek to explain away all art as the imitation of a perceived external. May they long continue in such directions!

There cannot be such a thing as an eclectic philosophy, but there may be eclectic philosophers.

Every man is an eclectic who, out of the things which surround him, or which take place about him, appropriates as much as is conformable to his nature; and in this sense must be included all that which we term culture and progress, whether in matters of theory or of practice.

Two eclectic philosophers could, therefore, become the greatest of adversaries if, born in antagonistic conditions, they, each from his own side, appropriated from all present and past philosophies as much as were suitable for their purpose. Look around you, and you will find that every

man acts in this way, and consequently fails to understand why he cannot convert others to his own manner of thinking.

It rarely happens that any one of advanced age becomes historical to himself or that his contemporaries become historical to him, so that he neither cares nor is able to argue with any one.

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Upon examining the matter more closely, it will be found that even the historian does not easily look upon history as something historical: for the individual historian, to whatever age he may belong, always writes as though he had himself been present at the time of which he treats; he is not content with simply relating the facts and movements of that time. Even the mere chronicler only points more or less to the limitations and peculiarities of his town or monastery or age.

Various maxims of the ancients, which we are in the habit of repeating time after time, bore an entirely different signification from that which is generally attached to them in modern times.

The saying that no one who is unacquainted with, or a stranger to, geometry, should enter the school of the philosopher, does not mean that a man must be a mathematician in order to become a sage.

Geometry is here thought of in its primary elements, as contained in Euclid and placed before every beginner; and then it is the most perfect preliminary study or introduction to philosophy.

When a boy begins to understand that an invisible point must always come before a visible one, and that the shortest line between two given points is to be thought of as a straight one, before ever it has been drawn on paper with a pencil, he experiences a certain pride and pleasure. And rightly, too; for the source of all thought has been laid open to him; idea and reality, *potentia et actu*, are now become clear to him; the philosopher has no new discovery to offer him; as a geometrician, he has found for himself the basis of all thought.

If, now, we turn to that famous utterance: "Know thyself!" we must not seek to explain it in an ascetic sense. It is in nowise the self-knowledge of our modern hypochondriacs, humorists, and self-tormentors. Its meaning is simply this: pay a certain amount of attention to yourself; take notice of yourself, so as to learn how you come to stand towards those like you and towards the world. For this purpose no psychological torture is necessary; every capable man knows and feels what it means; it is a piece of good advice which every man will find of the greatest advantage in practice.

Think of the greatness of the ancients, and especially of

the Socratic school, which places before our eyes the source and standard of all life and action, and calls upon us not to waste our energies in empty speculation, but to live and do.

Whilst our scholastic education always refers us back to antiquity and furthers the study of the Greek and Latin languages, we may congratulate ourselves that these studies, so indispensable to the higher culture, will never fall into disuse.

If we approach antiquity and earnestly study it, in order to develop ourselves thereby, a feeling comes over us as though it were only then that we really became men.

The school-man, who endeavours to write and speak in Latin, deems himself grander and more exalted than would be allowable in every-day life.

The mind that is susceptible to poetry and plastic art feels that in the presence of antiquity it is transported into the most gratifying ideal state of nature; and even to this day the Homeric songs have retained the power of delivering us, at least for the moment, from the frightful burden which the tradition of several thousand years has rolled upon us.

There are only two true religions: the one recognises and worships as devoid of form the Holy which

and about us; the other recognises and worships it in the most beautiful of forms. Everything that lies between these two is idolatry.

It cannot be denied that through the Reformation the human mind tried to free itself; and the renaissance of Greek and Roman antiquity led to the desire, the longing for a freer, more becoming, and tasteful life. And this movement was favoured in no small degree by the fact that the hearts of men were striving to return to a certain simple state of nature, whilst their imagination was endeavouring to concentrate itself.

The Saints were all at once driven out of Heaven; and senses, thoughts, and hearts were turned from a divine mother with a tender babe, to the grown-up man doing good works and suffering unjustly, who was afterward transfigured into a half-god, and then recognised and worshipped as God himself.

He stood before a background, in which the Creator had opened out the universe; from him there emanated a spiritual influence, his sufferings were adopted as an example, and his transfiguration formed the pledge of everlastingness.

As incense tends to revive a coal, so prayer revives the hopes of the heart.

I am convinced that the Bible will always appear more beautiful the more we understand it—that is to say, the more we observe and realise that every word which we accept in a general sense and apply specially to ourselves, bore, under certain temporal and local circumstances, a peculiar, special, direct, and individual reference.

• Strictly speaking, we must effect a reformation of ourselves every day and maintain a protestant attitude towards others, even though it be in no religious sense.

We should use our utmost endeavours to fulfil an inevitable and deeply earnest task, which has each day to be renewed. The task is this: to avail ourselves of those words which as nearly as possible coincide with the things that we feel, observe, experience, imagine, and reason.

Let every man test himself, and he will find that this is a far more difficult task than might be supposed; for unfortunately words are usually employed as mere make-shifts: a man almost invariably thinks and understands things more clearly than he expresses them.

Let us persevere in our endeavours to dispel as far as we can, by means of clearness and honesty of purpose,

any false, irrelevant, or inadequate ideas which may originate in, or find their way into, our minds or those of others.

The older we grow, the greater will the ordeals become.

Where I cease to be moral I have no longer any power left.

Censorship and liberty of the press will ever continue in conflict with each other. Censorship is required and practised by the powerful; liberty of the press is a thing demanded by the weak. The former want to be obeyed, and will not allow themselves to be disturbed either in their designs or in their actions by the thoughtless contradictions of others; the latter would fain give expression to their views, in order to legitimise their non-compliance.

Yet it must also be noted that the weaker party, held in subjection, likewise seeks, in its own way, to interfere with the liberty of the press; that is to say, in cases where it conspires and wants to avoid being betrayed.

A man is never deceived by others; he deceives himself.

We require in our language a word to express the same

relation to the word "nation" as "childhood" bears to "child." The teacher must hear childhood and not the child, the lawgiver and ruler must heed "nationhood" and not the nation. The former always says the same things, is sensible, consistent, straightforward, and true; the latter wants so many things that it never really knows its own mind. And in this sense the law can and ought to be the generally expressed will of "nationhood," a will which is never declared by the mob, but which the intelligent man is able to detect, which the wise man knows how to appease, and the good man is eager to satisfy.

What right we have to wield power is a question which we never ask ourselves,—we simply rule. As to whether the nation has a right to depose us, we do not pause to consider,—we only take precautions to preserve it from the temptation of so doing.

If death could be dispensed with, we should have nothing to say against it; the difficulty would lie in abolishing capital punishment. Even when this is done, we find the same re-introduced after a time.

If society foregoes the right of inflicting capital punishment, self-help straightway intervenes, and revenge for bloodshed clamours at the door.

Laws are always made by old persons and by men. Youths and women want the exceptions, old persons the rules.

It is not the intelligent man who rules, but intelligence; not the wise man, but wisdom.

To praise a man is to place oneself on a level with him.

Knowledge alone is not sufficient; one must also learn to apply it. It is not enough to will; one must also act.

There is no such thing as patriotic art or patriotic science. Both art and science belong, like all else that is great and good, to the whole world, and can only be promoted by a free and universal interchange of ideas among contemporaries, with constant reference to that which we have inherited and learnt from the past.

The poetic talent is as much the heritage of the peasant as of the knight; all that is necessary is that each one shall grasp his position and treat it worthily.

Yorick Sterne was the finest spirit that ever worked.

Whoso reads him will at once attain a fine feeling of freedom. His humour is inimitable, and it is not every kind of humour that frees the soul.

The sight is the finest of the senses. The other four teach us only through the organs of contact; we hear, feel, smell, and touch everything by means of contact; but the sense of sight stands far higher, is refined above the material, and approaches the faculties of the mind itself.

If we were to put ourselves in the place of other persons, jealousy and hatred would fall away; and if we put others in our place, there would be a great diminution of pride and conceit.

Meditation and action have been compared to Rachel and Leah; the one is more attractive, the other more fruitful.

With the exception of health and virtue, there is nothing so valuable in life as information and knowledge; nor is there anything that can be obtained so readily and purchased so cheaply. The whole task consists in preserving a calm attitude of mind, and the expenditure is time,—a thing which we cannot save without expending it.

If we could only save and put by time, as we put by ready money, without making use of it, this might form a kind of excuse for the idleness of half the world; and yet the excuse would not be altogether an adequate one, for it would result in a man's living on the principal without troubling himself about the interest.

Modern poets add a lot of water to their ink.

Among the manifold strange absurdities of the schools, none appears to me so ridiculous as the practice of disputing about the genuineness of old writings and works. Is it the author or the work that we admire or censure? It is always the author only whom we have before us; of what concern are the names to us when we are seeking to explain some production of the mind?

Who is there that will maintain that we have Virgil or Homer before us when we are reading the words which are attributed to the one or the other? We have the writers of those words before us, and what more do we require? Indeed, I may say that the learned who are so precise in an unessential matter of this kind appear to me to be no wiser than a fair lady who once, with the sweetest of smiles, asked me who was the author of the Shakespearian plays.

It is better to be engaged in the most insignificant occupation in the world rather than to look upon half-an-hour as being of no importance.

Courage and modesty are the most unequivocal of virtues, for their nature is such that hypocrisy cannot imitate them; and they moreover have this quality in common, that they both express themselves in the same hue.

Of the whole rabble of thieves the fools are the worst; for they rob you of both time and peace of mind.

It is our moral sense which leads us to pay a proper regard to ourselves; and our sense of conduct dictates that we should value others.

Art and science are terms which are frequently employed, yet the exact distinction between them is rarely understood; the one is often used instead of the other.

Nor am I altogether satisfied with the various ways in which they have been defined. I remember having somewhere found science compared to wit and art to humour. Herein I discern more imagination than philosophy. It

gives us an idea of the difference between the two, but says nothing about the characteristics peculiar to each.

I am of opinion that science might be termed the knowledge of the universal, or abstract knowledge; art, on the other hand, would be science applied in action: science would represent the reason, art its mechanism; and the latter might on this account be called practical science. Finally, science would form the theorem, art the problem. •

It will perhaps be urged that, although poetry is held to be an art, it is not mechanical. But I deny that it is an art; nor is it a science. Arts and sciences are attained through reflection; but not so poetry, for this is an inspiration; it was infused into the soul when first it manifested itself. It should, consequently, be called neither art nor science, but genius.

At the present time every educated person ought to take Sterne's works in hand once more, so that the nineteenth century might also learn how much we owe to that writer, and understand to what extent we may yet become indebted to him.

By the success of later literatures that which formerly exercised a potent influence becomes obscured, and those very productions which are the outcome thereof, gain the

upper hand. It is well, therefore, that we should from time to time look back. Whatever originality we may possess will be all the better preserved and stimulated, if we do not lose sight of our ancestors.

May the study of Greek and Roman literature ever remain the basis of the higher culture!

Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian antiquities are never more than curiosities; it is a very good thing to make oneself and the world acquainted with them, yet they will be of but little help to our moral and æsthetic culture.

The German runs no greater danger than that of advancing himself with, and after the example of, his neighbours. There is perhaps no nation better fitted to work out its own development; and for this reason it has derived the utmost advantage from the fact that it obtained the notice of the world so late.

Even men of insight fail to perceive that they often endeavour to explain things which form the very basis of our experience, and in which we must simply acquiesce. Yet even this may not be altogether without advantage, as otherwise we should leave off our researches too soon.

The man who henceforth does not apply himself to some art or handicraft will be in a bad way. Amid the hurry and bustle of the world he is no longer furthered by knowledge; and, before he has had time to take note of everything, he loses himself.

Nowadays, moreover, the world forces a universal culture upon us, and we need not therefore trouble ourselves further about it; what we must do is to appropriate some particular branch of culture.

The greatest difficulties lie where we do not look for them.

Laurence Sterne was born in 1713, and died in 1768. To understand him, we must not neglect to study the moral and ecclesiastical development of that period, and it should furthermore be borne in mind that he was a contemporary of Warburton.

A free intellect, such as his, lies in danger of becoming audacious, were it not that a noble disposition for good helps to preserve the moral balance.

With a lightness of touch he developed himself entirely

from within; amid constant conflict he distinguished the true from the false, held fast unto the former and maintained an attitude of absolute defiance towards the latter.

He had a decided aversion to earnestness, for the reason that it is a didactic and dogmatic quality and may easily lead to pedantry—a thing for which he had the greatest abhorrence. Hence his antipathy against terminology.

Amid his manifold studies and reading, he everywhere discerns the inadequate and ridiculous.

Shandeism he terms the impossibility to think of any serious subject for two minutes at a time.

This rapid change from earnestness to jest, from sympathy to indifference, from sorrow to delight, and so on, is said to be a characteristic of the Irish.

His sagacity and penetration are alike unbounded. His mirth, contentedness, and tolerance in travelling, where these qualities are most liable to be put to the test, will not easily be matched.

Much as we are delighted at beholding a free intellect of this sort, we must yet bear in mind, in this very instance, that of all, or at any rate of most of that which transports us, we dare not venture to appropriate anything.

The element of coarseness, in which he indulges with so much discrimination and thought, would suffice to spoil many another man.

His position with regard to his wife, as also to the world at large, is worthy of note. He did not, he somewhere tells us, make use of his misfortune as a wise man should have done.

He jests in a delightful manner concerning the contradictions which render his position an equivocal one.

Preaching, he tells us, he cannot endure, for he believes he must have had a surfeit of it in his youth.

In nothing a model to be followed, in all things he is suggestive and calls forth ideas.

"Our interest in public affairs is as a rule mere philistinism."

"Nothing is more highly to be prized than the value of the day."

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

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Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt! This strange utterance could only have come from one who considered himself to be autochthonous. He who deems it an honour to be descended from wise ancestors, will at least credit them with having possessed as much common-sense as himself.

The most original authors of modern times are such, not because they produce anything new, but merely because they have the capacity of saying things the like of which seem never to have been said before.

Hence the best sign of originality lies in knowing how to seize and develop a thought in so fruitful a manner that no one could easily have discovered how much there lay concealed in it.

There are many thoughts which come only from general culture, like buds from green branches. When roses are in bloom, you find them blooming everywhere.

Properly speaking, everything depends upon a man's intentions. Where these exist, thoughts will likewise appear; and as the intentions are, so too are the thoughts.

He who lives for any length of time in a high position does not, indeed, experience all that a man can experience;

yet he experiences analogous things, and perhaps some things which are without a parallel elsewhere.

The first and last thing that is demanded of genius is love of truth.

He who is and remains true to himself and to others, possesses the noblest quality of the highest talents.

Great talents are the finest means of conciliation.

In its methods genius is, in a sense, ubiquitous. It tends in the direction of general truths before experience, and in that of particular truths after it.

An active scepticism is one which unceasingly endeavours to overcome itself and to attain, by means of regulated experience, to a kind of conditioned certainty.

The general characteristic of the sceptical mind is its tendency to inquire whether any particular predicate really belongs to any particular object. And such an inquiry is instituted for the purpose of safely applying in actual practice what has thus been discovered and proved.

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

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An active, gifted mind, that applies itself with a practical object to the work which lies nearest, is the most estimable thing on earth.

"Perfection is the measure of Heaven; and the desire to attain perfection the measure of man."

• Not that alone which is inborn, but also that which is acquired, constitutes the man.

A man is sufficiently equipped for all the real necessities of life, if he trusts his senses and develops them in such a manner that they remain worthy of being trusted.

The senses do not deceive; it is the judgment that deceives.

The brute creation is taught by its organs; mankind teaches its organs and dominates them.

The Jewish character: Energy forms the basis of all. The aims are direct, immediate. Every Jew, including even the most diminutive and insignificant, displays a determined desire to effect his purpose, which latter is always mundane, temporal, momentary.

All direct appeals to live up to ideals are of doubtful utility, especially if addressed to women. Whatever the explanation may be, a man of any importance is generally surrounded by a seraglio of a more or less religious, moral, and æsthetic character.

Every great idea which is ushered into the world as a gospel, becomes an offence to the immovable and pedantic multitude, and a folly to those who possess much learning^o but no depth.

Every idea appears at first as a strange visitor, and when it begins to be realised, it is hardly to be distinguished from fantasy and fantastery.

This is what has been termed, in a good and in a bad sense, ideology; and it explains why the ideologist is so repugnant to hard-working and practical every-day men.

A person may recognise the utility of an idea and yet not understand clearly how to make a perfect use of it.

"I believe in a God!" That is a fine, a laudable thing to say. But to recognise God where and howsoever He may reveal Himself, is the only true bliss on earth.

Kepler said: "My greatest desire is that I may perceive the God whom I find everywhere in the external world, in like manner also within and inside myself." The good man was unaware that at that very moment the godlike in himself stood in the closest relation with the godlike in the Universe.

The teleological proof of the existence of God has been set aside by critical reason; this we do not mind. But that which is not accepted as a proof, should at all events be recognised as a feeling, and we therefore gladly recall all such pious efforts, from brontotheology to niphotheology. Why should we not recognise in the lightning, the thunder, and the stormwind, the approach of an overwhelming Power, and in the scent of flowers and the gently rustling zephyr the presence of a Being full of love?

Question: What is predestination?

Answer: God is wiser and more powerful than we, and therefore he deals with us as He pleases.

The Apocrypha: It would be of the utmost advantage to collect once again the historical evidence bearing upon these writings, and to show that those very portions of the Apocrypha with which the congregations were inundated already in the earliest centuries of our era, and from which our canon still suffers, are the real cause why Christianity has never at any moment of political and ecclesiastical

history been able to come forth and display itself in all its beauty and purity.

The incurable evil of these religious disputes consists in the fact that the one side tries to trace back the highest interest of mankind to fables and empty words, whilst the other would give it a basis with which no one is satisfied.

Toleration ought in reality to be merely a transitory mood. It must lead to recognition. To tolerate is to affront.

Faith, Love, and Hope once felt, in a peaceful, sociable hour, a plastic impulse in their nature; together they set to work and created a lovely image, a Pandora in the higher sense, namely Patience.

A decrepit camel can still carry the burdens of a number of asses.

Does the sparrow know how the stork feels?

For the present-day world it is not worth our while to do anything; for the existing order of things may pass away in a moment. It is for the past and the future world that we

must work; for the former, to show that we recognise its merits, and for the latter, to try and increase its value.

Let every man ask himself with which of his faculties he has the best chance of influencing his age.

Let no man imagine that people have waited for him as for the Saviour.

Character, in matters great and small, consists in a man steadfastly pursuing the things of which he feels himself capable.

He who would be active, and has to be so, need only think of that which is requisite for the moment, and he will succeed without difficulty or confusion. This is one of the advantages of women, if only they understand it.

The moment is a kind of public. We must deceive it into believing that we are doing something, and then it will leave us alone to follow our course in secret; whereat its grandchildren cannot but be astonished.

There are men who make their knowledge serve them in the place of insight.

In some states the violent movements experienced in almost all directions have resulted in a certain overpressure in the system of education, the harm of which will be more generally felt later on, although even now it is readily admitted by competent and honest authorities. Capable men live in a kind of despair at being compelled, in virtue of their instructions and their office, to teach and communicate matters which they hold to be useless and harmful.

There is no sadder sight than a person directly striving after the unconditioned in this thoroughly conditioned world; this, in the year 1830, is perhaps more out of place than ever.

Before the Revolution all was *effort*; afterwards it was all changed to *demand*.

Whether a nation can become mature is indeed a strange question. I would answer it in the affirmative if all men could be born thirty years old. But since youth will ever be over-hasty, whereas old age will remain dilatory and hesitating, it will always happen that the really mature man is hemmed in between the two and driven to strange measures in order to get on and make his way.

It does not look well for monarchs to give utterance to their opinions through the medium of the press; for power

should act and not talk. The designs of the liberal party will always bear being read: for those who are not in power may at least express their views in speech, since they are not allowed to act. When Mazarin was shown some satirical songs on a new tax, "Let them sing," he said, "as long as they pay."

If a man has not read the newspapers for some months, and then reads them all together, he will find out how much time is wasted upon this class of literature. The world has always been divided into parties, and these divisions are especially marked at the present time; and whenever any doubtful state of things arises, the journalist flatters either the one or the other party to a certain extent, and feeds the inner inclination or antipathy, as the case may be, from day to day, until at length a decision is arrived at, and the outcome is regarded with amazement, as though it were of divine origin.

What a gain it would be for life, if a man were to find out earlier and learn betimes that the best way to remain on good terms with the object of his affections is by praising his rival. Then her heart is opened out to you, all anxiety lest she may wound your feelings, all fear of losing you, disappear; she makes you her confidant, and you are left happy in the conviction that it is to you that the fruit of the tree belongs, if only you have sufficient good humour to leave to others the leaves that may fall.

The most excellent wife is considered to be that one who, towards her children, is able to take the place of their father, should the latter be taken from them.

Vanity is a desire for personal glory. The vain person wishes to be honoured and sought after, not on account of his good qualities, merits, or achievements, but on account of his mere individual existence. At best, therefore, it is a frivolous beauty whom vanity befits.

People have complained, in the gentlest manner possible, that I seem more disposed to communicate my views on foreign literature than on our own; and yet this is after all quite natural. The foreigners either do not ascertain what I say about them, or they do not heed it, or else they acquiesce in it. One is polite at a distance. But close by, just as in good society, one should avoid introducing any subject that may give offence; and yet every mark of disapproval is at once regarded as an offence.

The classical is health; and the romantic, disease.

Ovid remained classical even in exile; he sought misfortune, not in himself, but in his banishment from the capital of the world.

The romantic is already fallen into its own abyss; one can scarcely imagine anything more degraded than the worst of the new productions.

The English and the French have gone beyond us in this respect. Bodies which fall into corruption whilst they are still living, and are edified by a detailed contemplation of their own decay; dead men who remain alive for the ruin of others, and who feed their death on the living,—to this have our makers of literature attained.

In antiquity such features were only the symptom of some rare disease; but with the moderns the disease has become endemic and epidemic.

Literature falls into decay only as men become more and more corrupt.

What a time it is when we must envy the dead in their graves!

The things which are true, good, and excellent, are simple and always alike, whatever their appearance may be. But the error which calls forth blame is extremely manifold and varied; it is in conflict, not only with the good and the true, but also with itself; it contradicts itself. Hence it follows that in every literature the expressions of censure should exceed those of praise.

In the Greeks, whose poetry and rhetoric was simple and positive, we encounter expressions of approval oftener than of disapproval. With the Romans, on the other hand, the contrary holds good; and the more corrupted poetry and rhetoric become, the more will censure grow and praise diminish.

There are certain empirical enthusiasts who, while they are right in praising new productions of merit, yet do so with such ecstasy as if no other good work had ever been seen in the world.

The translator must proceed until he reaches the untranslatable; then, and not till then, will he gain an idea of a foreign nation and a foreign tongue.

Of the most important matters of feeling as of reason, of experience as of reflection, we should treat only by word of mouth. The spoken word dies at once, unless another, suited to the hearer, immediately follows it and keeps it alive. Observe what takes place in social converse. If the word is not already dead by the time it reaches the listener, he murders it at once by a contradiction, a stipulation, a condition, a digression, a prevarication, and all the thousand artifices of conversation. In the case of the written word the evil is still greater. No one cares to read anything but that to which he is already in a certain measure accustomed; it is the known and the familiar

which he demands in an altered form. Yet the written word has this advantage: it endures and can abide the time when it may be allowed to bear fruit.

That which is reasonable and that which is unreasonable have both to encounter the like contradiction.

The spoken word should be used in reference to the time being, to the passing moment; but the written word should be used in reference to that which is distant and in the future.

Dialectics is the culture of the spirit of contradiction, which has been given to man that he may learn to recognise wherein things differ from one another.

With those who are really of a similar disposition to ourselves it is impossible for us to continue at variance for any length of time; we always come to an agreement again. But with those whose disposition is really opposed to our own we may try in vain to remain on harmonious terms; we shall always end by separating once more.

Opponents think that they refute us when they repeat their own opinions and take no notice of ours.

Those who are in the habit of contradicting and disputing should occasionally bear in mind that not every mode of speech is intelligible to every one.

A man hears only that which he understands.

I quite expect to find that many a reader will not agree with me; but he is bound to let that stand which he has before him in black and white. Another reader may perhaps have the very same copy before him and agree with me.

The truest liberality is appreciation.

The problem which many an aspiring man finds so difficult to solve is to recognise the merits of his older contemporaries without allowing himself to be hindered by their shortcomings.

There are persons who ponder over the shortcomings of their friends. There is nothing to be gained by this. I have always paid attention to the merits of my adversaries, and have derived advantages from doing so.

There are many men who imagine that they understand all the things which they experience.

The public should be treated like women; we must tell them absolutely nothing but that which they would like to hear.

• For every age in the life of man there is a corresponding philosophy. The child appears as a realist; for he finds himself as firmly convinced of the existence of, say, the apples and pears which he sees, as of his own existence. The youth, swayed by inward passion, has to scrutinise himself and think about his future; he becomes transformed into an idealist. The grown-up man, again, has every reason to become a sceptic; he is justified in doubting whether the means which he has chosen to any particular end are the right ones; before and during action he has to keep his understanding on the alert, so that he may not afterwards have to complain of a mistaken choice. The old man, however, will always confess to mysticism; he sees how many things seem to depend on pure chance, how folly succeeds and wisdom fails, how good and bad fortune are unexpectedly brought to the same level; so it is, and so it was in the past, and old age acquiesces in that which is, was, and will be.

As a man grows older, he must consciously remain at a certain stage.

It does not become a man of years to follow the fashion either in ideas or in dress. But he must know where he stands and whither the others are tending.

That which we call fashion is the tradition of the moment. All tradition carries with it a certain necessity for people to place themselves on a level with it.

Men have long been occupied with the critique of reason. I should like to see a critique of common-sense. It would be a true benefit to the human race if we could prove beyond all doubt to the ordinary intelligence how far it can go; and this is all that it really requires for life on this earth.

Empiricists always strive after the idea and fail to discover it in its manifold form. Theorists always seek it in the manifold and are unable to find it there.

Both are, however, to be found together in life, in action, and in art. This remark has often been made, but few know how to avail themselves thereof.

The thinker makes a great mistake when he inquires after cause and effect; they both together constitute the indivisible phenomenon. He who has learnt to recognise

this is on the right road to action and achievement. The genetic method shows us a better way, even though we may not find it altogether adequate.

All practical men endeavour to bring the world under their hands; all thinkers, under their heads. How far each succeeds, they may see for themselves.

• *The Realists:* That which is not achieved is not demanded.

The Idealists: That which is not demanded cannot be at once achieved.

Can it be maintained that a man thinks only when he cannot think out that of which he is thinking?

What is invention? It is the conclusion of that which we were seeking.

It is with history as with nature and with anything that is profound, whether it be past, present, or future: the more deeply and earnestly a man examines into it, the more difficult are the problems by which he finds himself confronted. He who is not afraid of them, but attacks them boldly, becomes conscious of a higher culture and greater ease, the further he advances.

Every phenomenon lies within our grasp if we treat it as an inclined plane, which can easily be ascended even though the thick end of the wedge be steep and inaccessible.

He who would enter upon some field of knowledge must be deceived or else deceive himself, unless external constraints irresistibly determine him. Who would become a doctor, if he could forthwith behold all the gruesome sights that lie in store for him?

How many years must a man be doing something before he learns at all what is to be done and how to do it!

He who soon learns to recognise constraints will without difficulty attain freedom; but he upon whom constraints force themselves at a late stage, will find that freedom, if he attains it, is only bitterness after all.

Duty: where a man loves what he commands himself to do.

Art rests upon a kind of religious sense, upon a deep, immutable earnestness: this is the reason why Art so readily unites itself to Religion. Religion does not stand

in need of any taste for art, but rests upon its own earnestness; yet neither does it impart earnestness any more than it imparts taste.

There is a tradition to the effect that Dædalus, the first plastic artist, once envied the inventor of the potter's wheel. As a matter of fact, envy may never have entered his mind, but the good man probably felt and foresaw that technique would eventually prove deleterious to art.

A noble philosopher, in speaking of architecture, called it *frozen music*, and found that many people shook their heads over his remark. We believe that no better repetition of this noble thought can be given than by calling architecture *speechless music*.

Art is a serious occupation, and especially so when it is engaged upon noble and sacred subjects. But the artist stands above his art and his subject: above the former, since he uses it for his purposes; and above the latter, since he treats it after his own method.

Humour is one of the elements of genius, but, as soon as it predominates, it ceases to be anything more than a mere substitute for genius; it accompanies art in its decline, aids in its destruction, and serves finally to annihilate it.

Art is an interpreter of the inexpressible; and it therefore seems a folly to try to convey its meaning afresh by means of words. Yet in endeavouring to achieve this, the understanding reaps a large benefit, and this in turn aids the faculty in practice.

He who would at the present time write, or even dispute, about art, should have some idea of what philosophy has achieved and continues to achieve in our day.

He who would tax an author with obscurity should first of all examine his own mind, to see if it is perfectly clear. In the twilight even the plainest writing is rendered illegible.

He who would dispute about the truth of maxims should be able to give a clear explanation of them, and within this clearness he should confine his disputes, so that he may not after all be left fighting with images which are nothing but the creations of his own brain.

The obscurity of certain maxims is after all but relative. It is not possible for everything which is rendered evident to a man in practice to be made clear to the mere listener.

An artist who executes valuable work is not always able to render account of his own compositions or of those of others.

Nature and Idea cannot be separated from each other without Art, as also Life, being destroyed.

The very thing in works of art which strikes uneducated persons as bearing a resemblance to nature, is not nature (externally), but the man (nature internally).

We know of no world otherwise than in relation to mankind; and we wish for no art save that which bears the stamp of this relation.

Search within yourselves and ye will find everything; rejoice if, outside and beyond you, there exists a nature, call it as you will, which says "Yea" and "Amen" to everything that you have found within yourselves.

Many a thing may long have been discovered or invented without exercising an influence in the world; again, it may exercise such an influence without people being aware of it or without proving generally effective: for this reason every history of discovery or invention abounds in the most extraordinary enigmas.

It is quite as difficult to learn anything from models as from nature.

In Art, the form requires to be digested as well as the material, nay more, it takes even longer to digest it.

Many a man has studied the antique without quite becoming master of its essence. Is he on this account to be blamed?

Aims of a higher order, even though they be not fulfilled, are in themselves more valuable than lower ones entirely fulfilled.

Because Albrecht Dürer, despite his incomparable talent, could never rise to the idea of the symmetry of beauty, or even to the thought of a fitting conformity to the purpose in view, are we always to cling to the earth?

Albrecht Dürer enjoyed the advantages of a profound, realistic perception and an affectionate human sympathy with all present conditions. He was retarded by a gloomy fantasy devoid of form or foundation.

It would be interesting to show how Martin Schön approaches him, and how the merits of German art were centred in these two; and it would be useful to show that it was not evening every day.

In every Italian school the butterfly broke loose from the chrysalis.

Are we to go on for ever creeping about like caterpillars, merely because certain northern artists thus find themselves in their element?

After Klopstock delivered us from rhyme, and Voss gave us models of prose, are we to make doggerel once more, like Hans Sachs?

Let us be many-sided ! Turnips are pleasing to the taste, especially when mixed with chestnuts. And these two noble products grow far apart.

A man is many-sided only if he strives after higher things because he *must* (in earnest), and descends unto lower ones because he *wills* (in jest).

In every art there is a certain level which may be attained, so to speak, through the mere use of one's natural talents. But at the same time it is impossible to pass beyond it unless art comes to one's aid.

It is sometimes said in praise of an artist that he has evolved everything out of himself. Would that I might never

hear this again! Properly speaking, the productions of an original genius of that kind are composed for the most part of reminiscences; any one who has experience will be able to point them out separately.

In the presence of Nature even moderate talent is always possessed of insight. For this reason drawings from Nature, if executed at all carefully, always afford pleasure.

To finally make a complete work out of a number of sketches is a thing which even the best artists do not always achieve.

Allegory transforms the phenomenon into a concept, the concept into an image; but in such a way that in the image the concept may ever be preserved, circumscribed and complete, at hand and expressible.

Symbolism transforms the phenomenon into an idea, the idea into an image, in such a way that in the image the idea still remains unattainable and for ever effective, and, though it be expressed in all languages, yet remains inexpressible.

In true Art there is no preparatory school, but there are preparations; the best of these consists in the most in-

significant pupils taking a real interest in the work of the master. Colour-grinders have before now made excellent painters.

Kant has made us acquainted with the critique of the reason, and taught us that this, the highest of human powers, has need to keep a careful watch over itself. Of the great benefit which we have derived therefrom, it is to be hoped that every man has convinced himself. But I should like to suggest that we require a critique of the senses, if Art in general, and especially German art, is ever to regain its vigour and to advance in a satisfactory and hopeful manner.

The basis of all theatrical art, as of every other art, consists in truth and conformity to Nature. The more significant this is, and the higher the degree in which the poet and the actor are able to realise it, the loftier will be the level occupied by the stage. In this respect Germany is placed at a great advantage by the fact that the supply of excellent poetry has become more general, and has also been spread abroad outside and beyond the theatre.

Peculiarity of expression is the beginning and end of all art. Now, every nation possesses some special characteristic differing from the general characteristics of mankind; and this, although it may at first perhaps form an obstacle for us, yet in the end, if we put up with it and surrendered ourselves to

it, might eventually lead to the subordination or suppression of our own natural characteristics.

A curious aspect is presented by Aristotle's fragments of the Treatise on the art of poetry. Any one of us, who knows all the ins and outs of the theatre, who has devoted a considerable portion of his life to this art, and has himself done a lot of work in connection therewith, will at once see that it is necessary above all to make oneself acquainted with that author's philosophical mode of thinking, if one would understand the point of view from which he regarded this form of art. Beyond this he only confuses our studies, and modern poesy has only suffered through applying even the barest outlines of his doctrine.

The task which the tragic poet has to set himself and to carry out is nothing other than to point in the past to some psychical-moral phenomenon, represented in the form of a comprehensible experiment.

What we term motives are therefore, properly speaking, phenomena of the human soul which have been and will be repeated, and which the poet merely shows to be historical.

To compose a dramatic work, genius is required. Feeling should predominate at the end, reason in the middle, and

understanding at the commencement, and all these should be represented in due proportions by means of a vivid and clear power of imagination.

A man cannot very well stand by himself, and he is therefore glad to join a party; for even if he fails to find rest there, he at any rate meets with quiet and security.

It is a great mistake, and one which befalls many an observer, to forthwith connect a conclusion with a contemplation and to regard both as of equal value.

The history of science shows us, throughout its whole course, certain epochs following upon one another, now with greater, now with lesser rapidity. Some important view, whether original or revived, is expressed; sooner or later it meets with recognition; fellow-workers appear; the result finds its way into the schools; it is taught and communicated abroad; and we observe with regret that it does not in the least matter whether the view be true or false; in either case it follows the same course and ends by becoming a mere phrase, a lifeless word stamped on the memory.

Let a man first instruct himself, and then he will derive instruction from others.

Theories are, as a rule, the over-hasty efforts of an impatient mind which is eager to rid itself of phenomena, and therefore puts in their place pictures, notions, nay, often mere words. Men may suspect or even see clearly that such efforts are nothing but makeshifts; but do not passion and party-spirit always love makeshifts? And rightly too, because they are so greatly in need of them.

Even though a man discover the cause of an error, it does not follow that he will succeed in ridding himself of that error.

Everything that is alive forms an atmosphere around itself.

With regard to the errors of the age, it is difficult to know what course to adopt. If you strive against them, you stand alone; if you give in to them, they bring you neither honour nor joy.

In New York there are some ninety different Christian sects, each one of which acknowledges God and the Lord in its own way without troubling itself further about the others. In the study of Nature, nay, in every branch of study, we must of necessity arrive at a similar condition; for what is the meaning of every one speaking of toleration and yet endeavouring to hinder others from thinking and expressing themselves after their own manner?

To err is to live as though truth did not exist. To discover the error for oneself and for others, is to make a retrospective discovery.

With the gradual extension of knowledge a change must from time to time take place in our ideas; it mostly occurs in accordance with fresh maxims, yet it always remains provisional.

If two masters of the same art differ from each other in their manner of presenting it, the insoluble problem most probably lies midway between them.

Nature does not trouble herself about any single error; she herself can never act otherwise than rightly, nor does she heed the consequences of her action.

Everything for which Nature has a legitimate capacity she sometimes carries out and brings to light.

All professional men are greatly handicapped by not being allowed to ignore things which are useless.

"We more readily acknowledge errors, failings, and weaknesses in our conduct than in our thought."

The reason of this is that the conscience is humble and even derives a certain satisfaction from being put to shame, whereas the intellect, on the other hand, is proud, and, if forced to recant, is driven to despair.

Hence it also follows that truths which have been divulged are at first tacitly admitted, and then gradually spread abroad, until at last the very thing which was at first obstinately denied appears as something quite natural. •

Ignorant persons raise questions which have been answered by the wise thousands of years ago.

The man who sees a phenomenon before him often allows his thoughts to range beyond it; he who only hears others talking of it never thinks about it at all.

Authority. Man cannot exist without authority, and yet it carries with it as much of error as of truth. It perpetuates one by one things which should pass away one by one; it rejects and allows to pass away things which should be preserved; and it forms the principal cause why mankind remains at the same stage instead of advancing.

On the appearance of anything new and important, the

majority of people ask : Of what use is it? And they are not wrong ; for it is only through the utility of anything that they are enabled to estimate its value.

Nothing is so harmful to a new truth as an old error.

Stones are silent teachers ; they make him who examines them silent, and the best lesson which they teach is not to say too much.

Authority—the fact, namely, that something has already happened or been said or decided—is of great value ; but it is only the pedant who demands authority for everything.

An old foundation may be deserving of respect ; but a man will not on that account waive his right to begin building afresh in some other spot.

Since man is really interested in nothing but his own opinion, every one who has an opinion to put forward looks about him on all sides for means of strengthening himself and others in it. He avails himself of the truth as long as it is serviceable ; but he seizes with passion and eloquence on that which is false whenever it can be of use for the moment, either to dazzle others with it as a

kind of half-truth, or to use it as a stopgap, so as to seemingly unite things that are disconnected. This experience at first caused me vexation, and then sorrow; and now it affords me a mischievous pleasure. I have pledged myself never again to expose a proceeding of this kind.

A man must persevere in the belief that the incomprehensible is comprehensible, as otherwise he would not continue his researches.

There are pedants who are at the same time scoundrels, and they are the worst of all.

To understand that the sky is everywhere blue, it is not necessary to have travelled all round the world.

The universal and the particular coincide; the particular is the universal manifesting itself under different conditions.

A man need not have seen or experienced everything himself; but if he would entrust himself to others and to their experience, he must bear in mind that he has now to deal with three things: the object and two subjects.

In science there is much that is certain, if only we know how to attach a due importance to its problems and do not allow ourselves to be led astray by the exceptions.

Our fault consists in this: that we doubt things which are certain, and would fain establish things which are uncertain. My maxim, with regard to the study of Nature, is: to hold fast unto that which is certain and to keep a watchful eye upon that which is uncertain.

What a master a man would be in his own sphere if only he taught nothing useless!

The most foolish of ideas is that every one believes himself compelled to hand down that which people think they have known.

There are many persons who, if they had not felt themselves obliged to repeat what is untrue for the reason that they have already uttered it once, would have turned out different men altogether.

The false has the advantage that people can always prate about it; the true, on the other hand, must be utilised at once, otherwise it does not exist.

The Germans—and herein they do not stand alone—possess the gift of rendering the sciences inaccessible.

The English are masters of the art of making an immediate use of any new discovery, until it leads once more to further discovery and fresh action. Will any one now ask why it is that they surpass us in everything?

That which a man knows, he really knows only for himself. If I speak with another upon a matter of which I believe I know something, he at once thinks that he knows still more about it, and I have to withdraw my knowledge and reserve it for myself alone.

Truth furthers us; but out of error nothing is evolved, it only *involves* us.

There is nothing more odious than the majority; for it consists of a few powerful leaders, a certain number of accommodating scoundrels and subservient weaklings, and a mass of men who trudge after them without in the least knowing their own minds.

We praise the eighteenth century for having occupied itself chiefly with analysis. To the nineteenth the task now

remains of discovering the false syntheses which prevail and of analysing their contents anew.

Men are vexed at finding that truth is so simple. They should bear in mind that they have quite enough to do in applying it to their needs in practice.

A school may be regarded as a single individual who talks to himself for a hundred years and finds an extraordinary pleasure in his own being, however foolish it may be.

A false doctrine cannot be refuted; for it rests upon the conviction that the false is true. But the opposite can, may, and must be maintained unceasingly.

An unattainable truth may exercise an influence for a time; yet, instead of complete enlightenment, a dazzling error suddenly appears in its place; the world is quite satisfied with this, and thus hundreds of years are wasted over an illusion.

Everything that comes into existence seeks room for itself and requires duration; hence it drives something else from its place and shortens its duration.

He who would defend that which is false has every reason to advance softly and to study a polite manner of address. He who has right upon his side must come forward abruptly; deference would, in him, be quite out of place.

And so it has been rightly said that he who would deceive his fellow-men, must before all things make absurdity plausible.

The farther we advance in experience, the nearer we shall approach the unfathomable. The better we are able to utilise our experience, the more we shall find that the unfathomable is of no practical utility.

The finest achievement for men of thought is to have fathomed the fathomable, and quietly to revere the unfathomable.

The man whose insight causes him to declare himself limited, has approached the most nearly to perfection.

There are two things of which a man cannot beware too much: of obstinacy, if he limits himself to his own point of view; and of incompetence, if he steps beyond it.

Incompetence offers a greater resistance to success than one would think.

Since men are incompetent to perform all the things which are necessary, they trouble themselves about things which are useless.

The century is advanced, but every individual begins afresh.

The things which our friends do with and for us, form a portion of our lives; for they strengthen and advance our personality. But the things which our enemies devise against us do not form part of our lives; we only experience them, reject them, and guard ourselves against them as against frosts, storms, rain, hail, or any other external inconvenience which may be encountered.

A man would not care to live *with* every one, and so, too, he cannot live *for* every one. He who understands this properly will know how to place a sufficiently high value upon his friends, and not to hate or persecute his enemies. On the contrary, there is hardly a greater advantage for a man to acquire than that of discerning the merits of his opponents; it gives him a decided ascendancy over them.

If we survey the history of the past, we shall everywhere encounter personalities with some of which we could agree, and with others of which we should certainly find ourselves quarrelling ere long.

Every man knows how to value the achievements and experiences of his life; most of all, the man who thinks and reflects in his old age. He has a comfortable feeling of confidence that no one can rob him of them.

It very rarely happens that we satisfy ourselves, and therefore it is all the more consoling for us to feel that we have satisfied others.

We look back upon our life only as on a disconnected series of epochs, because our omissions and failures are always the first things that strike us and outweigh, in our imagination, the things which we have achieved and attained.

Of all this the sympathetic youth sees nothing; he beholds, enjoys, makes use of the youth of some predecessor, and his heart is delighted and edified thereby, as though he had once before been what he now is.

The progress of knowledge is very much retarded by the

fact that people so often devote their attention either to things which are not worth knowing or to such as are not knowable.

Art is the true interpreter. And to speak upon Art is to try and interpret the interpreter; yet this process has resulted in a great many valuable benefits to us.

Science assists us before all things in this, that it to some extent lightens the feeling of wonder which is implanted in us by Nature, and then again, as life becomes gradually more complex, calls forth new facilities for the avoidance of that which would harm us and the cultivation of that which would benefit us.

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